Stabbity Bunny

Richard RIVERA Dwayne BIDDIX Liezl BUENAVENTURA

2
VOLUME

Stabbity Bunny

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Volume 2

"Dedicated to my guys, Wayne, Brass, and Ian. Without your love and encouragement, I would never have found my way."

- Richard Rivera

Writer/Creator
Richard Rivera

Artist
Dwayne Biddix

Colorist
Liezl Buenaventura

Letterer
Jaymes Reed

Editor
Wayne Hall

Production
Sean Callahan

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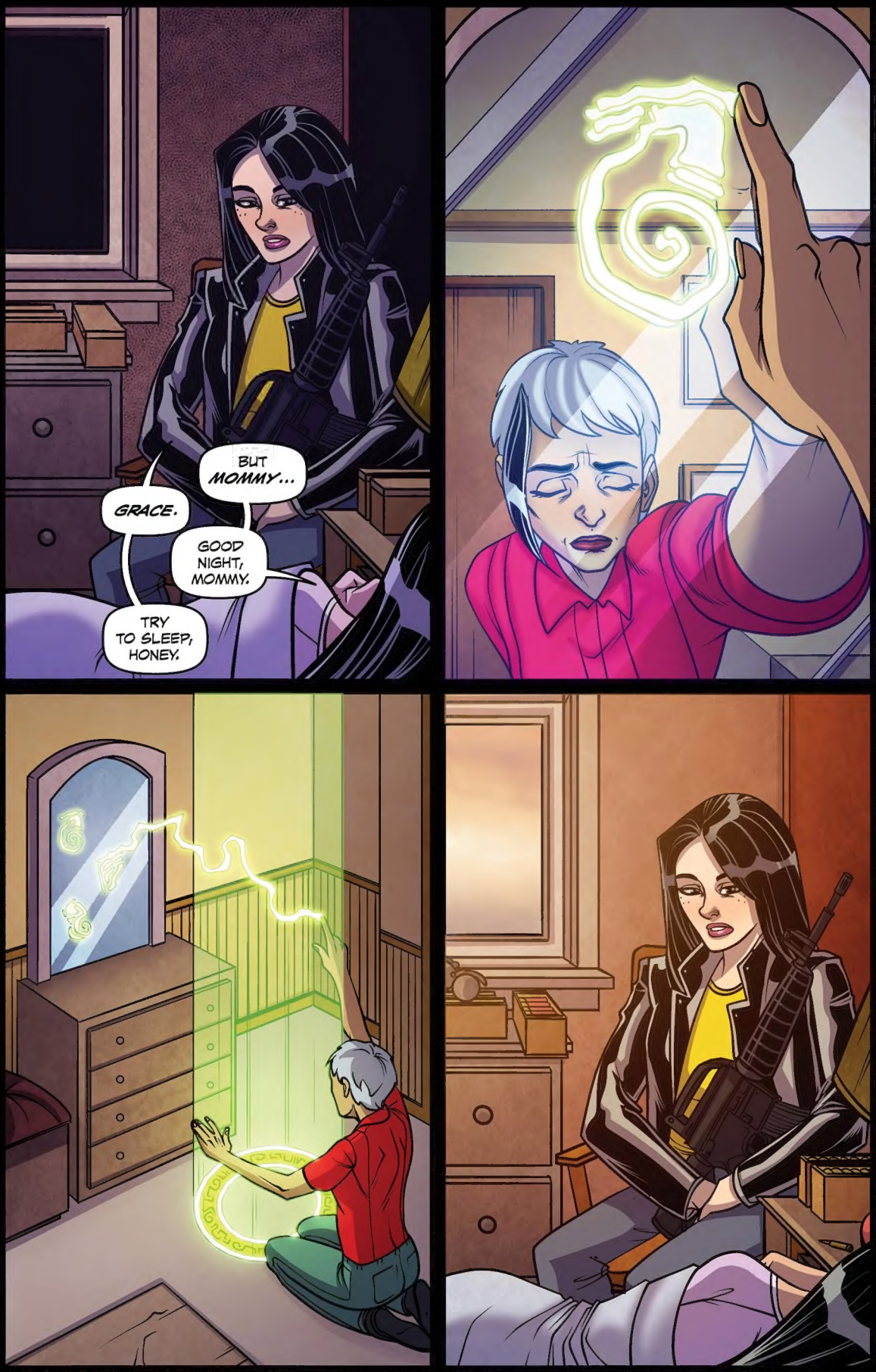
CHAPTER 1


BUT MOMMY...
GRACE.
GOOD NIGHT, MOMMY.
TRY TO SLEEP, HONEY.

SWEETIE? I PROMISED I'D WAKE YOU UP BEFORE WE DID ANYTHING ELSE THIS MORNING.
CAN WE TAKE HIM OUT OF THE BOX? HE SAVED US. YOU SAW!
WE SAW IT, HONEY. WE SAW IT ALL... AND...
YOU'VE SAID SOMETIMES THERE'S NO OTHER WAY. STABBITY STOPPED THE BAD MAYOR. WE'RE ALL SAFE, MOMMY.
WHAT WAS THAT, GRACE? WHY AREN'T YOU SCARED? HAVE YOU SEEN IT BEFORE?
STABBITY IS... HE'S NOT ALONE... THERE ARE OTHERS. THE BIG ONE, HE'S STILL SLEEPING... MOSTLY.
STABBITY WOULD NEVER LET HIM HURT US.

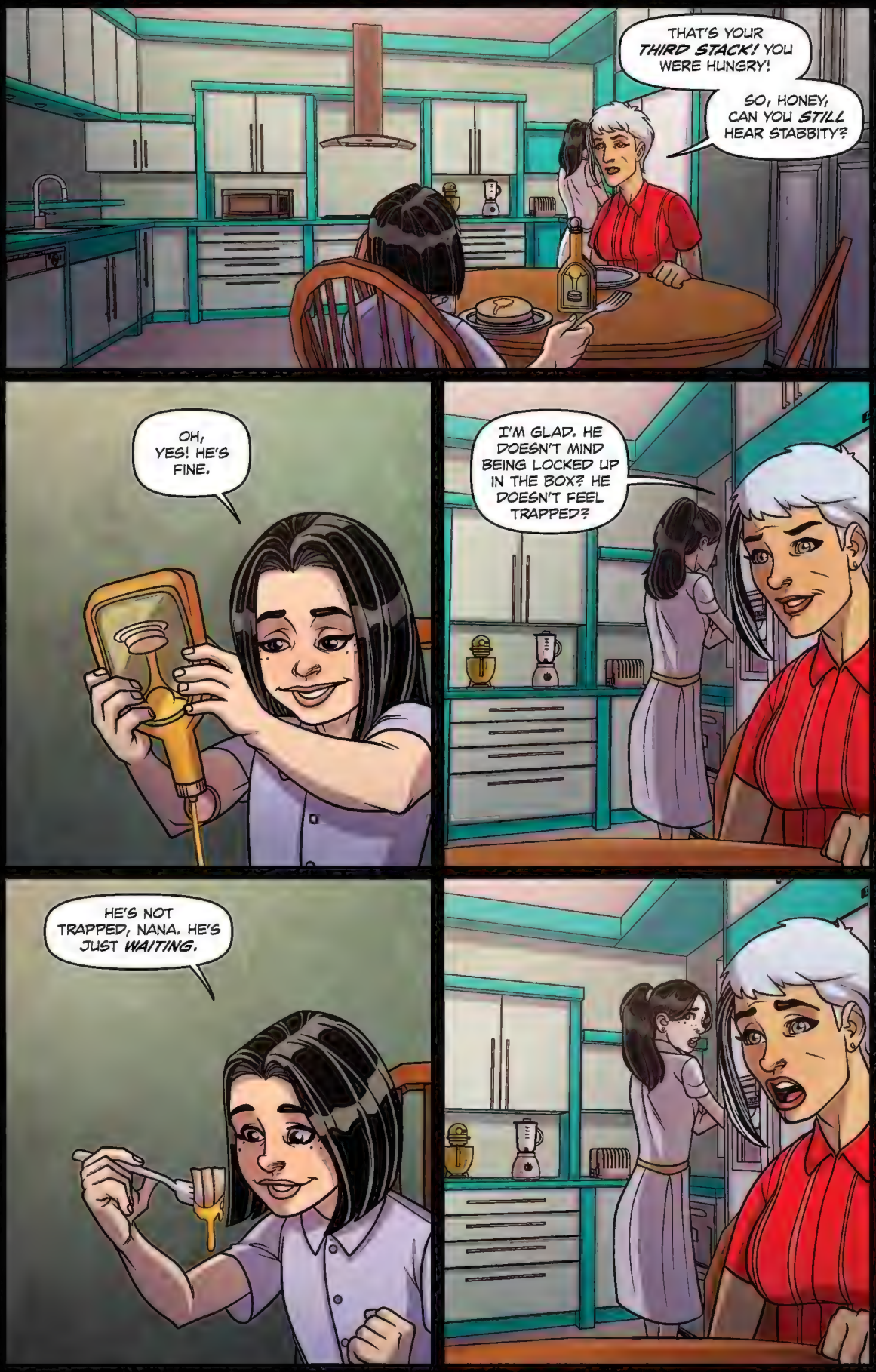
I REMEMBER WHEN I FIRST GAVE YOU STABBITY. IT WAS YOUR FOURTH BIRTHDAY... PASSED HIM DOWN AS MY MOTHER HAD TO ME.
YOU LOVED HIM RIGHT AWAY, AND THE TWO OF YOU SHARED EVERYTHING.
YES, AND WHEN NANA STARTED TEACHING ME MAGIC, PART OF IT WAS SEEING WHAT WOULD ANSWER ME. I TRIED AND TRIED WITH HANZI, BUT HE NEVER DID.
BUT I KEPT TRYING.
AND ONE DAY... HE ANSWERED.

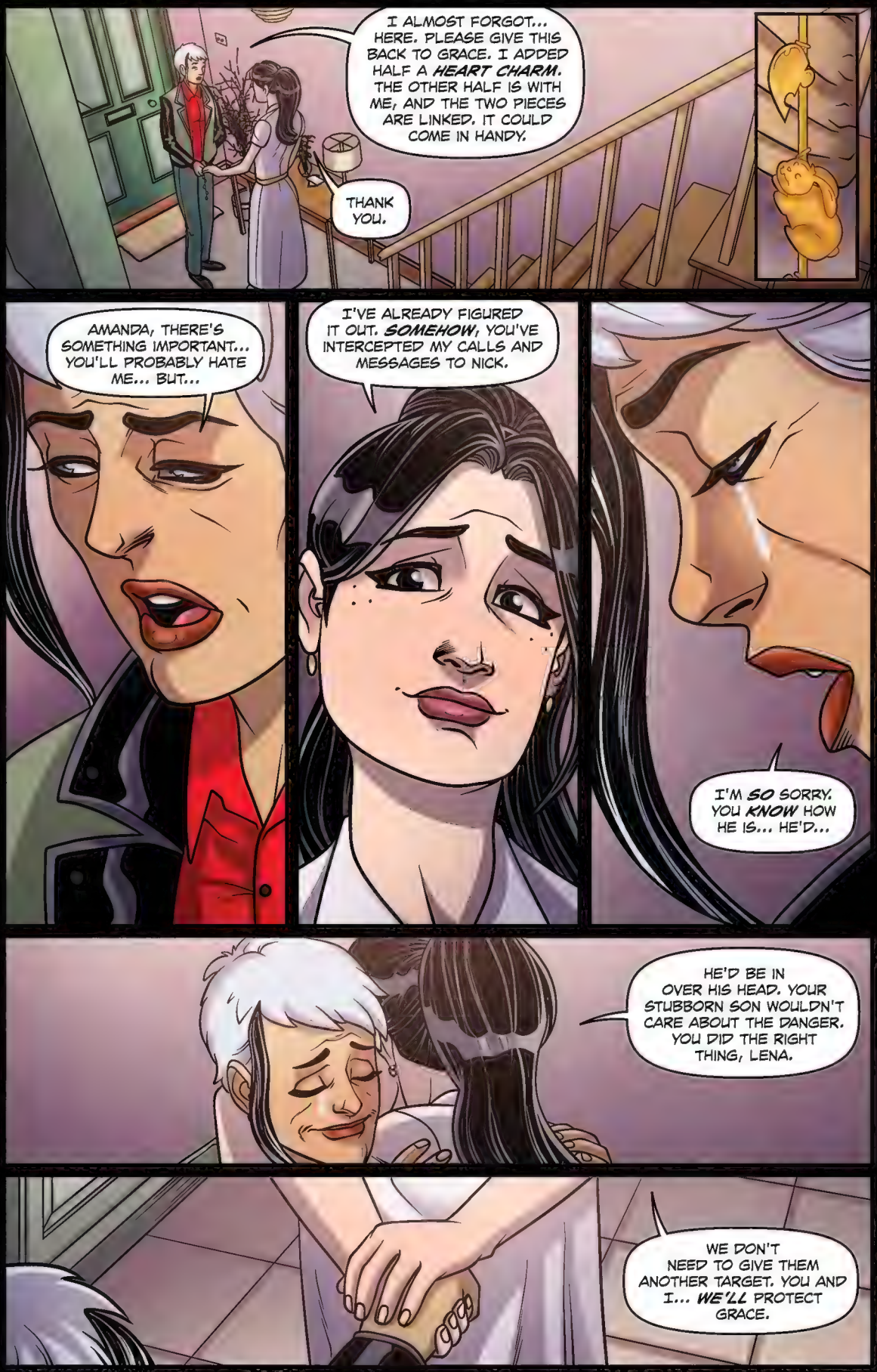
I STARTED TO WORRY ABOUT YOU, GRACE. IT WAS LIKE THE BUNNY WAS YOUR ONLY FRIEND.
WHEN RONNIE MOVED INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD, I WAS HAPPY YOU TWO GOT ALONG SO WELL.
YOU GUYS EVEN MADE UP HOLIDAYS! PIRATE DAY WAS MY FAVORITE.
WHEN I THINK BACK, THOUGH... ALL THE NIGHTS I TUCKED YOU IN... WITH THAT..

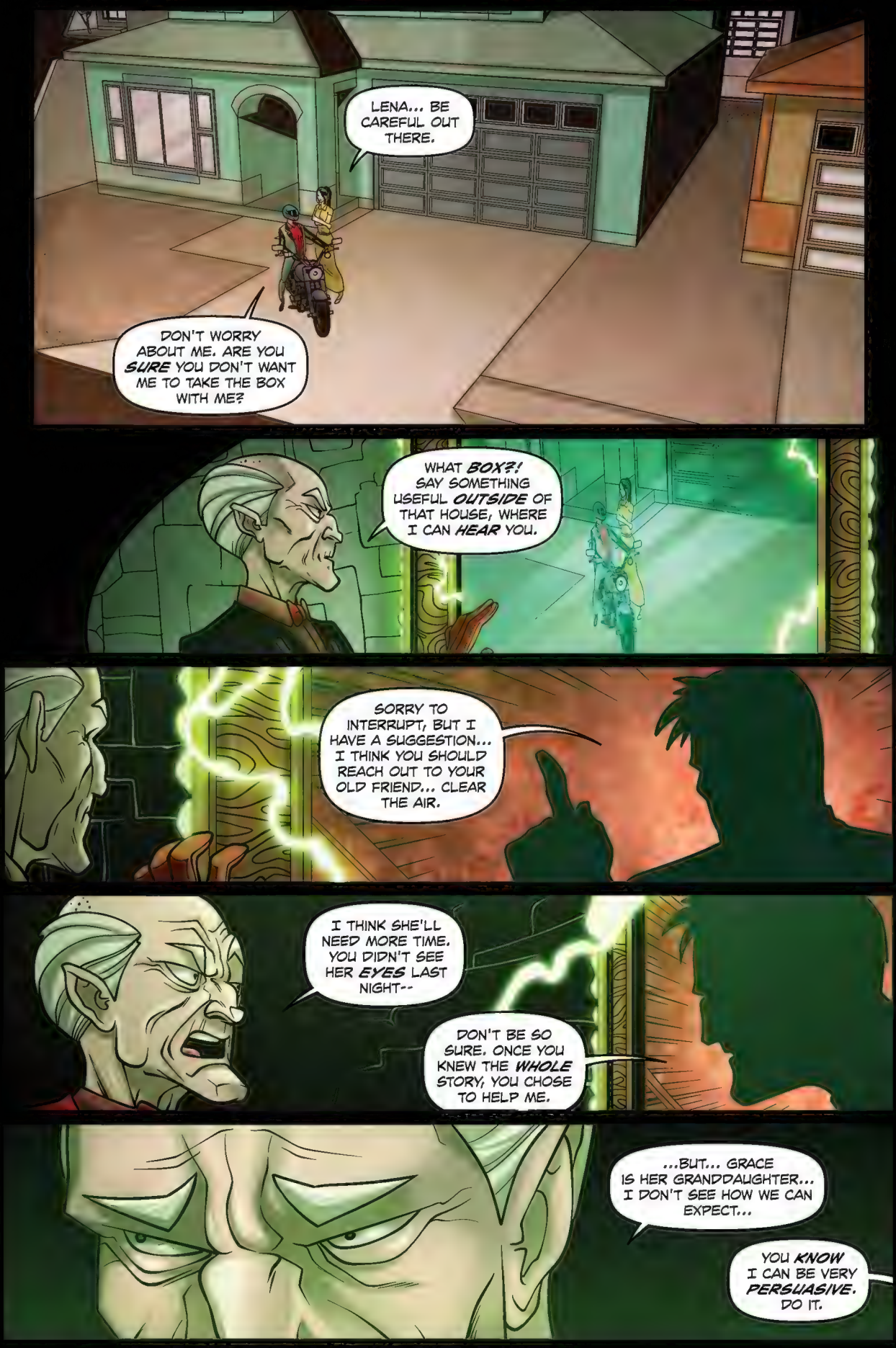
I HAD NO IDEA.
WHAT IS THAT CREATURE INSIDE STABBITY?
HAD YOU SEEN IT BEFORE LAST NIGHT?

NOT EXACTLY, BUT THE NIGHT MR. GREENE KIDNAPPED ME, I SAW SOMETHING.
I HEARD MR. GREENE SCREAMING, BUT WHEN I GOT THERE, HE WAS GONE. ALL I SAW WAS A SHADOW THAT MOVED BY ITSELF.
IT WAS LIKE A SNAKE, AND IT CRAWLED INTO STABBITY'S EYE.
HE WAS HURT AND CONFUSED, BUT I THINK HE LET IT OUT TO SAVE ME.
I CARRIED HIM BACK TO THE TRAIL.

THEN THERE WERE OTHERS. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT MS. YODER DID.
SHE TRIED TO KILL GREAT-GRANDPA.
I KNOW IT SEEMS UNFAIR. STABBITY SAVES US, BUT IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S THE ONE IN TROUBLE.
I SYMPATHIZE MORE THAN YOU KNOW.
YOU KNOW WHAT ALWAYS MAKES *ME* FEEL BETTER? *PANCAKES!*


THAT'S YOUR THIRD STACK! YOU WERE HUNGRY!
SO, HONEY, CAN YOU STILL HEAR STABBITY?
OH, YES! HE'S FINE.
I'M GLAD. HE DOESN'T MIND BEING LOCKED UP IN THE BOX? HE DOESN'T FEEL TRAPPED?
HE'S NOT TRAPPED, NANA. HE'S JUST WAITING.


I ALMOST FORGOT... HERE. PLEASE GIVE THIS BACK TO GRACE. I ADDED HALF A HEART CHARM. THE OTHER HALF IS WITH ME, AND THE TWO PIECES ARE LINKED. IT COULD COME IN HANDY.
THANK YOU.
AMANDA, THERE'S SOMETHING IMPORTANT... YOU'LL PROBABLY HATE ME... BUT...
I'VE ALREADY FIGURED IT OUT. SOMEHOW, YOU'VE INTERCEPTED MY CALLS AND MESSAGES TO NICK.
I'M SO SORRY. YOU KNOW HOW HE IS... HE'D...
HE'D BE IN OVER HIS HEAD. YOUR STUBBORN SON WOULDN'T CARE ABOUT THE DANGER. YOU DID THE RIGHT THING, LENA.
WE DON'T NEED TO GIVE THEM ANOTHER TARGET. YOU AND I... WE'LL PROTECT GRACE.


LENA... BE CAREFUL OUT THERE.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT ME TO TAKE THE BOX WITH ME?
WHAT BOX?! SAY SOMETHING USEFUL OUTSIDE OF THAT HOUSE, WHERE I CAN HEAR YOU.
SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT I HAVE A SUGGESTION... I THINK YOU SHOULD REACH OUT TO YOUR OLD FRIEND... CLEAR THE AIR.
I THINK SHE'LL NEED MORE TIME. YOU DIDN'T SEE HER EYES LAST NIGHT--
DON'T BE SO SURE. ONCE YOU KNEW THE WHOLE STORY, YOU CHOSE TO HELP ME.
...BUT... GRACE IS HER GRANDDAUGHTER... I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN EXPECT...
YOU KNOW I CAN BE VERY PERSUASIVE. DO IT.

WE NEED TO TALK. NOW.
KRSH

THAT'S BETTER. YOU KNOW I WORRY, DEAR LENA. MOTORCYCLES ARE SO DANGEROUS.

IS THIS REALLY *NECESSARY?* I'M HAPPY TO TALK. WE ALWAYS SEEMED TO GET ALONG BETTER WITH EACH OTHER THAN EITHER OF US DID WITH THE OTHERS...
THIS ISN'T LIKE THE *OLD* DAYS... I HAVE A *PARTNER*... BUT... YOU'RE RIGHT.
LET'S CHAT... OLD FRIEND.
THANK YOU.
BUT NO *TRICKS!* OR--
OF COURSE...

TWO HOURS LATER...
SO, THAT'S REALLY ALL YOUR FAMILY KNOWS ABOUT THIS?!
ANY LIGHT YOU CARE TO SHED WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED...
SORRY, BUT I'M ASKING THE QUESTIONS HERE...
...LIKE... MARRYING COSMO... REALLY? YOU KNEW HOW I FELT... THAT MAN WAS A CRETIN. I THOUGHT WE--
YOU KNOW MY PEOPLE... THE MARRIAGE WAS ARRANGED.
I EVENTUALLY RAN OUT OF EXCUSES.
HE WAS A GOOD MAN. I CAME TO CARE FOR HIM A GREAT DEAL.

YOU WERE GONE ALMOST THIRTY YEARS.
BUT I RECOGNIZED YOUR VOICE IMMEDIATELY.
CLINK
WE'VE HAD A CONNECTION FROM THE START.
LISTEN TO US. TOO MUCH WINE. WE PROBABLY SOUND SO--
...FOOLISH.

LET ME EXPLAIN, LENA.
THIS IS MEANT TO BE AN OPEN EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION. I FEEL WE HAVE FAILED DISASTROUSLY, AND I BLAME MYSELF. LET ME BE MORE FORTHCOMING... AS A SIGN OF GOOD FAITH...
I WAS A VICTIM OF A CRUEL INJUSTICE... SOMETHING... WAS STOLEN FROM ME. I'M NOT EXACTLY ***BLAMING*** HER DESCENDANTS, BUT I HAVE SUFFERED FOR A CENTURY, AND THEY HAVE BEEN A LARGE PART OF MY AGONIZING FRUSTRATION.
I'D STILL BE SEARCHING HAD I NOT ENCOUNTERED GLYPH. HE'S TRULY A MAGNIFICENT EXAMPLE OF A MAN DEVOTING HIMSELF TO ***OUR*** CRAFT.
HE'S BEEN BEYOND HELPFUL, EVEN RECONNECTING WITH YOU, LENA, AND ENCOURAGING YOU TO TEACH THAT DEAR CHILD A LITTLE ABOUT HER POTENTIAL. YOU'VE DONE THAT... A LITTLE ***TOO*** WELL.
HOWEVER, ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL! OUR PLAN, WITH A FEW RECENT ADJUSTMENTS, PROCEEDS.
I THINK YOU'LL BE DELIGHTED TO HEAR THAT YOUR GRANDDAUGHTER WILL PROBABLY ***SURVIVE***. YOU POLISHED HER UP SO BRIGHT AND SHINY. I CAN'T IMAGINE WASTING HER ABILITIES.

PROBABLY LIVE?
WE'RE DONE HERE. GLYPH, I SHOULD BE GOING.
YES! YOU... SHOULD... GO? YES, I THINK, THAT'S FOR THE BEST.
MAGDELINA, LET'S GO! THIS WAY!
THANK YOU, GLYPH.
I... I...
NO.
NO, THAT WILL NEVER DO. NOW. TURN HER AROUND.
ONE LAST CHANCE, FACE-TO-FACE... LET'S CHAT.

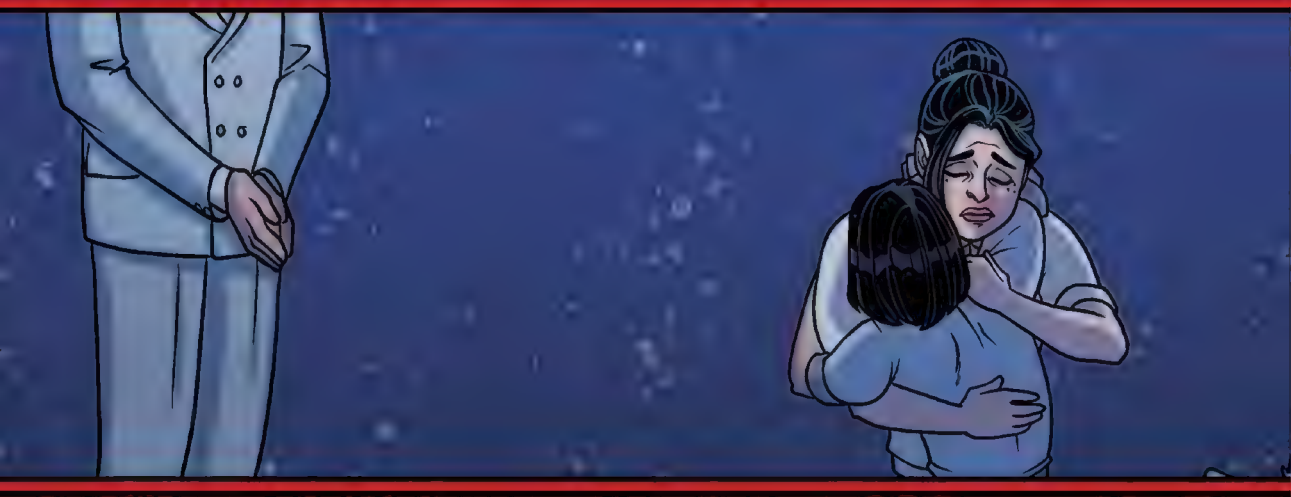
YOU'RE *HIM.* THE ONE *HUNTING* MY GRANDDAUGHTER'S FAMILY?
YES, TERRIFIED WHISPERS REFER TO MY POWER, BUT DARE *NOT* SPEAK MY NAME... I AM THE ONE THEY FEAR--
GOOD.
I'D HATE TO WASTE THIS ON ANYONE ELSE.
AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MINE GAVE ME THE ABILITY TO SUMMON THIS. ONCE.
GRRAAARRRGH!

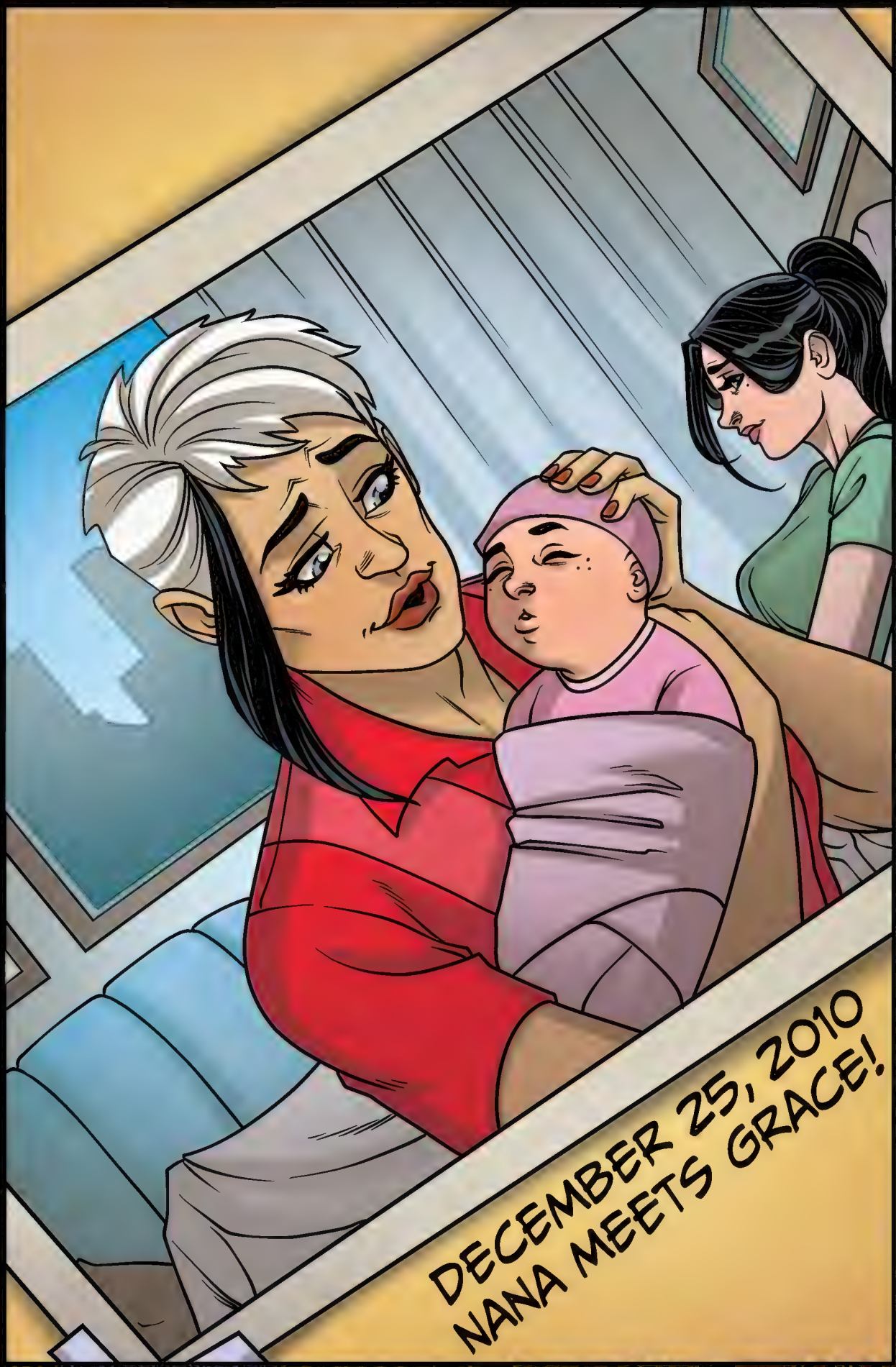
HOW DID YOU GET A REAVER'S SCYTHE?! IT'S UNPRECEDENTED. JUST ... ASTONISHING, REALLY, BUT IT'S GONE NOW.
NICE TRY.
THAT WAS A DISTRACTION.
THIS IS ME TRYING.
NO, LENA, THAT WILL BURN OUT ALL YOUR MAGIC! YOU COULD DIE!
IT'S MY FAMILY. WHAT PART OF GRANDMOTHER DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?
BLOOD MAGIC. DESPERATE, BUT STILL, YOU WON'T BE A MATCH FOR--

NO MATTER HOW POWERFUL YOU *THINK* YOU ARE, YOU'RE SELFISH. YOU FIGHT ONLY FOR *YOURSELF*, TO WIN. *YOU* ONLY CARE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO *YOU*.
YOU'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND. YOU'LL NEVER HAVE CHILDREN. THEY *ARE* MY LIFE. I WOULD DO ANYTHING TO SAVE THEM.
NNOOO... I CAN'T LOSE...
ANYTHING.
NOOO--
ARRRRR!
LET'S FINISH THIS.
GOUGH!

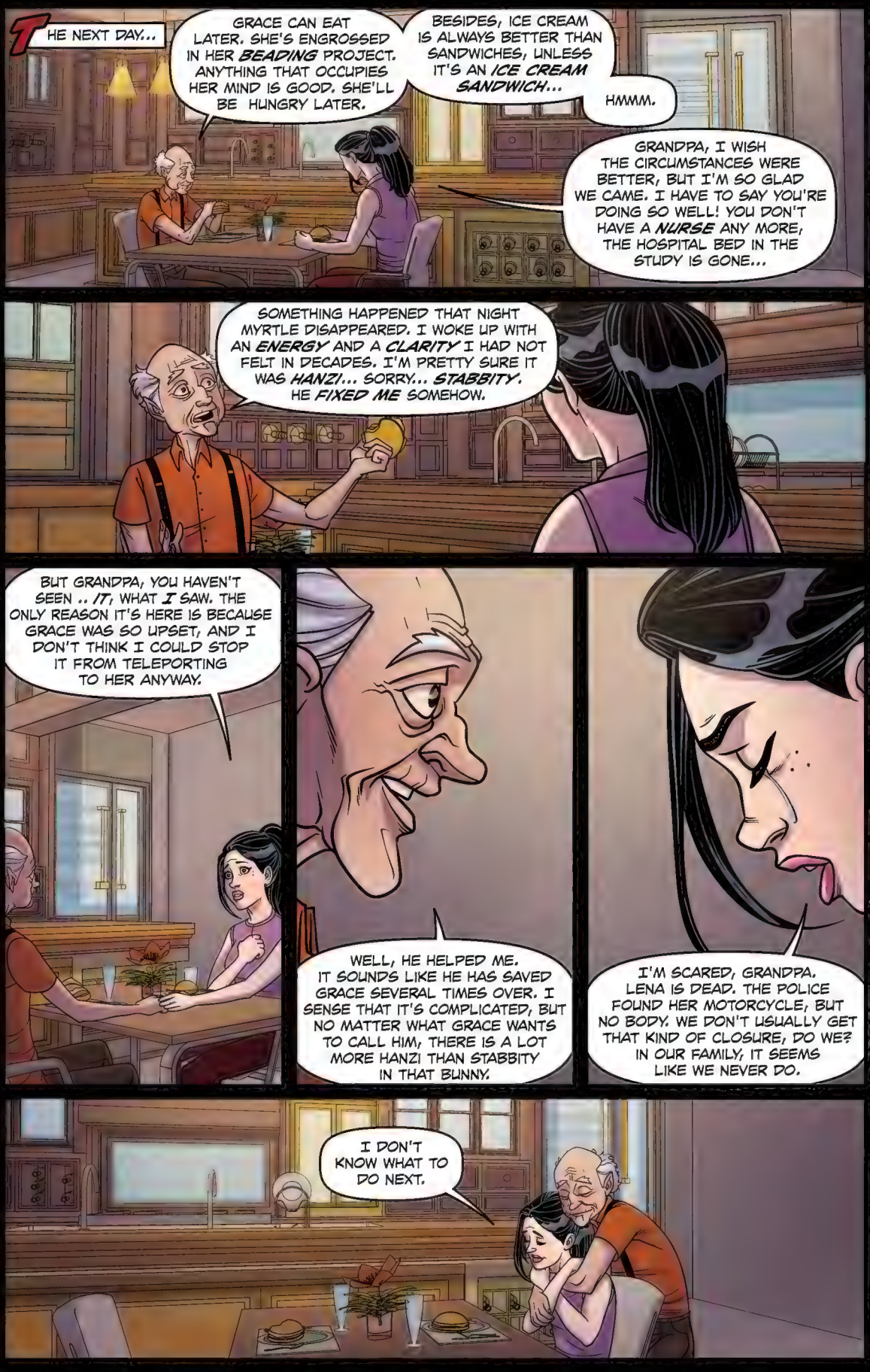
LET'S... FINISH... THIS.
SSSSS!
YES, LET'S.
GRACE.
NANAAAA!
MAGDALENA! I DIDN'T DO IT!
I KNO--
NO! NO! NO...

CHAPTER 2




DECEMBER 25, 2010
NANA MEETS GRACE!

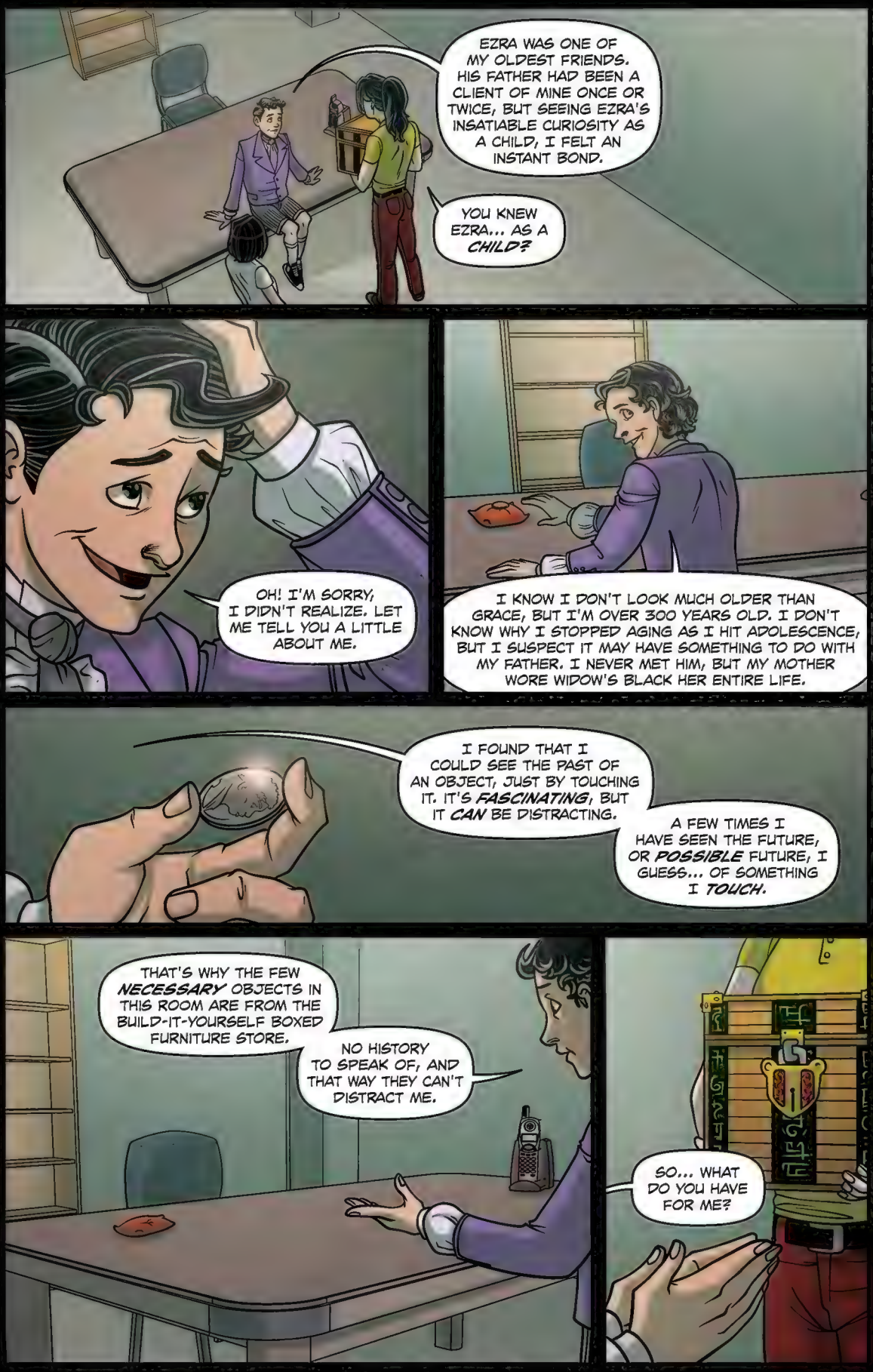
DEAR GRACE, I WILL CARRY HER LIGHT TO THE EDGE OF THE STARS, WHICH IS AS FAR AS I AM ABLE.
SHE LOVED YOU FIERCELY, GRACE. HER STRENGTH BURNS IN YOU.
BUT THIS IS THE TIME TO LISTEN TO YOUR HEART, DEAR CHILD.
NANA, I LOVE YOU.


THE NEXT DAY...
GRACE CAN EAT LATER. SHE'S ENGROSSED IN HER BEADING PROJECT. ANYTHING THAT OCCUPIES HER MIND IS GOOD. SHE'LL BE HUNGRY LATER.
BESIDES, ICE CREAM IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN SANDWICHES, UNLESS IT'S AN ICE CREAM SANDWICH...
HMMM.
GRANDPA, I WISH THE CIRCUMSTANCES WERE BETTER, BUT I'M SO GLAD WE CAME. I HAVE TO SAY YOU'RE DOING SO WELL! YOU DON'T HAVE A NURSE ANY MORE, THE HOSPITAL BED IN THE STUDY IS GONE...
SOMETHING HAPPENED THAT NIGHT MYRTLE DISAPPEARED. I WOKE UP WITH AN ENERGY AND A CLARITY I HAD NOT FELT IN DECADES. I'M PRETTY SURE IT WAS HANZI... SORRY... STABBITY. HE FIXED ME SOMEHOW.
BUT GRANDPA, YOU HAVEN'T SEEN .. IT, WHAT I SAW. THE ONLY REASON IT'S HERE IS BECAUSE GRACE WAS SO UPSET, AND I DON'T THINK I COULD STOP IT FROM TELEPORTING TO HER ANYWAY.
WELL, HE HELPED ME. IT SOUNDS LIKE HE HAS SAVED GRACE SEVERAL TIMES OVER. I SENSE THAT IT'S COMPLICATED, BUT NO MATTER WHAT GRACE WANTS TO CALL HIM, THERE IS A LOT MORE HANZI THAN STABBITY IN THAT BUNNY.
I'M SCARED, GRANDPA. LENA IS DEAD. THE POLICE FOUND HER MOTORCYCLE, BUT NO BODY. WE DON'T USUALLY GET THAT KIND OF CLOSURE, DO WE? IN OUR FAMILY, IT SEEMS LIKE WE NEVER DO.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT.

TAKE THE TIME YOU NEED, DEAR. GRANDPA IS--
WAIT! SOMETHING EZRA TOLD GRACE... HE SAID SOMEONE COULD HELP US.
THAT'S MY GIRL!
I'LL SEE HOW GRACE IS DOING!
HEH.
GRACE, HONEY, THAT'S BEAUTIFUL. DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT UNCLE EZRA WHISPERED TO YOU? ABOUT THE PERSON WHO COULD HELP US?
YES, MOMMY.
WHAT WAS THE NAME? DID HE GIVE YOU AN ADDRESS?
HE WORKS AT A PLACE CALLED SMITHSONIAN. HE'S DORIAN.

TWO DAYS AND MANY PEANUT BUTTER SANDWICHES LATER...
I'M SORRY, MA'AM, BUT DORIAN DOESN'T MEET WITH THE PUBLIC. THIS ISN'T ANTIQUES ROADSHOW.
BUT HE'S RIGHT THERE, AT THE END OF THE HALLWAY, ISN'T HE?
HE'S RIGHT DOWN THERE. COULDN'T I HAVE ONE MINUTE OF HIS TIME? THIS IS URGENT.
PLEASE HAVE A SEAT. I'LL RING HIS OFFICE AGAIN BUT, AS I TOLD YOU, HE DOESN'T ALWAYS ANSWER.
I APPRECIATE YOUR HELP.
DORIAN

NOW, I CAN TELL YOU'RE A GENUINE COIN FROM THE ERA, BUT ONE OF THE THIRTY PIECES? SHOW ME!
BZZT BZZT
BZZT BZZT
I SEE YOU PASSED THROUGH MANY HANDS AND MANY PURSES, NOTHING REMARK-- WHAT?! YOU REALLY WERE THERE!
I APOLOGIZE FOR EVER DOUBTING! I HAVE RARELY BEEN IN THE PRESENCE OF SUCH--
HELLO... LITTLE... GIRL?
HI!
WE... ARE... IN MY OFFICE, YES? DID I SEND FOR YOU AND FORGET?
NO, MY UNCLE EZRA SAID--
POOR EZRA. I'LL MISS HIM. WAIT!
THAT MEANS YOU'RE GRACE!
MADGE, DEAR? PLEASE SEND GRACE'S MOTHER IN, RIGHT AWAY!


EZRA WAS ONE OF MY OLDEST FRIENDS. HIS FATHER HAD BEEN A CLIENT OF MINE ONCE OR TWICE, BUT SEEING EZRA'S INSATIABLE CURIOSITY AS A CHILD, I FELT AN INSTANT BOND.
YOU KNEW EZRA... AS A *CHILD?*
OH! I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T REALIZE. LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT ME.
I KNOW I DON'T LOOK MUCH OLDER THAN GRACE, BUT I'M OVER 300 YEARS OLD. I DON'T KNOW WHY I STOPPED AGING AS I HIT ADOLESCENCE, BUT I SUSPECT IT MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH MY FATHER. I NEVER MET HIM, BUT MY MOTHER WORE WIDOW'S BLACK HER ENTIRE LIFE.
I FOUND THAT I COULD SEE THE PAST OF AN OBJECT, JUST BY TOUCHING IT. IT'S *FASCINATING*, BUT IT *CAN* BE DISTRACTING.
A FEW TIMES I HAVE SEEN THE FUTURE, OR *POSSIBLE* FUTURE, I GUESS... OF SOMETHING I *TOUCH*.
THAT'S WHY THE FEW *NECESSARY* OBJECTS IN THIS ROOM ARE FROM THE BUILD-IT-YOURSELF BOXED FURNITURE STORE.
NO HISTORY TO SPEAK OF, AND THAT WAY THEY CAN'T DISTRACT ME.
SO... WHAT DO YOU HAVE FOR ME?

OH! OH MY! EZRA TOLD ME, BUT...
I'LL NEED YOU TO REMOVE THE NECKLACE AND THE CHARM BRACELET. PUT THEM BOTH ON THE BOOKCASE.
DON'T WORRY. PEOPLE DON'T USUALLY WANDER IN, AND I'VE LOCKED THE DOOR NOW.
I'M GOING TO TAKE YOU TO MY REAL STUDY. THERE, WITHOUT DISTRACTIONS, I THINK I CAN BRING YOU BOTH ALONG ON THE JOURNEY.
WE'RE NOT REALLY IN THE PAST, OF COURSE, BUT WE CAN OBSERVE.
WE WON'T BE DISTURBED IN HERE. YOU BOTH HAVE A CONNECTION WITH STABBITY. THIS SHOULD WORK.
MOMMY HAS A SECRET ROOM JUST LIKE--
GRACE!

PLACING STABBITY ON THE PEDESTAL, DORIAN *ACTIVATES* HIS ABILITY...

WE WILL REMAIN IN CONTACT, NOW THAT THE JOURNEY HAS STARTED, UNTIL THE VERY END.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT TRYING TO STAY IN PHYSICAL CONTACT.

SOON, WE WILL FADE AWAY. WE WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE OR HEAR EACH OTHER.
ONLY THE *VISION* WILL REMAIN.

REMEMBER, THESE THINGS HAVE ALREADY HAPPENED. THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO. WE ARE *LESS THAN* SHADOWS.

IT'S A CABIN, A LONG TIME AGO. THE LADY LOOKS LIKE MY MOMMY.
NO! GRACE, HONEY, IT'S--

HERE YOU ARE. I APOLOGIZE, BUT WATER IS ALL WE HAVE TO OFFER WHEN IT COMES TO DRINK.
THERE IS NOTHING BETTER TO QUENCH A LOST TRAVELER'S THIRST.
WE ARE SO FAR FROM THE TOWN AND MOST OF OUR NEIGHBORS, YOU MUST BE *VERY* LOST.
A HAPPY ACCIDENT, CERTAINLY. THAT IS YOUR HUSBAND I SAW OVER THE HILL, TENDING TO A SMALL HERD OF GOATS?
NADYA, WHY DON'T YOU WATCH FOR YOUR FATHER *OUTSIDE?* HE LOVES IT WHEN YOU GREET HIM, BUT DON'T WANDER TOO FAR. I'M *SURE* HE'S NEARLY HOME.
WHO WERE YOU LOOKING TO FIND? THAT'S AN UNUSUAL *CANE.*
OHHHH... I TEND TO WANDER. MY FATHER FINDS IT QUITE VEXING. HE WISHES I'D SETTLE DOWN.
THIS CANE WAS A GIFT. YOU LIKE IT?
NO, I DIDN'T SAY *THAT.*
OH. YES. I *SEE.* HONESTY IS SO MUCH LESS CONFUSING THAN POLITENESS.

I HAD HOPED WE'D HAVE MORE TIME TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER. I CAN BE CHARMING IF YOU GIVE ME A CHANCE.
HOWEVER, I CANNOT DENY, THERE IS AN EFFICIENCY IN MOVING DIRECTLY TO NEGOTIATIONS.
YOU'RE THE HEALER EVERYONE WHISPERS ABOUT... I KNOW YOU'RE FAR MORE THAN THAT. I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR LINEAGE AND WHO YOU COULD BECOME.
I'M NOT ONE OF YOUR PEOPLE, BUT I THINK MY FAMILY'S RESOURCES COULD BE VERY USEFUL.
I REPRESENT A VERY POWERFUL... PERSON... WHO WOULD ALSO OFFER HIS PROTECTION. WHAT WE... WHAT I... PROPOSE IS A MARRIAGE.
WELL, I'M FLATTERED, BUT I HAVE A HUSBAND...
OH, YOU MEAN...
YOUR BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER... YEARS FROM NOW, OF COURSE.

RUMBLE
NEVER.
I DON'T MAKE THIS OFFER LIGHTLY. SURELY, IT'S WORTH DISCUSSING WITH YOUR HUSBAND.
AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE WITH A MAN OF MY WEALTH IS NOT SOMETHING TO DISMISS SO QUICKLY.
WHEN MY DAUGHTER MARRIES, IT WILL BE FOR LOVE, AND I HAVE GLIMPSED HIS FACE... IT WILL NOT BE YOU.
I SUPPOSE HE'LL BE SOME WANDERING VAGABOND? THE TWO OF THEM TRAVELING IN A TENTED WAGON, PILFERING JUST ENOUGH TO SCRAPE BY...
YOU NEED TO *LEAVE.* NOW.
RRRUUMMBLE

IS ALL WELL, ASTRID? THE GROUND WAS TREMBLING...
THIS TRAVELER WAS JUST LEAVING.
LET ME PUT THIS DOWN SO I CAN WISH YOU WELL, TRAVELER.
QUIET, FILTH... IMPORTANT PEOPLE ARE TALKING.
WHAT? I'M SORRY I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND.
I SAID--

AAARRGHhhh
BE QUIET!
FATHER!
NADYA, BEHIND ME!

YOU'RE A DEAD MAN.
SENTIMENTAL WITCH, YOU SHOULD HAVE GRABBED THE CANE. YOU KNEW HE WAS DEAD.
NOW, ABOUT YOUR DAUGHTER... HAS AN ELEMENTAL CHOSEN HER YET?
HOPEFULLY NOT EARTH... NO OFFENSE. I'M HOPING FOR SOMETHING... MORE... FIERY!
YOU LIKE HEAT? GOOD. YOUR BODY WILL BE BURNING IN THE MOLTEN HEART OF THE WORLD FOREVER!

GET OUT!
UURRRRGH!
RRRUMMBLE
RAKAAM
TRYING TO BRING ME DOWN TO YOUR LEVEL? NADYA WILL BE RAISED TO BE A LADY, WITH NO MEMORY OF HER HUMBLE BEGINNINGS.
STOP SAYING HER NAME!
I'M DEVASTATINGLY DISAPPOINTED. MUD?
IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN D--

KOOM!

NADYA...
IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY, BABY.
HOW SWEET...
BUT MOMMYS SHOULDN'T LIE!

YOU SEE, I WIN EITHER WAY... THROUGH MARRIAGE AND INFLUENCING YOUR DAUGHTER OR BY KILLING YOU BOTH. WITH YOUR THREAD CUT, A NEW CLAN WILL TAKE YOUR PLACE IN THE TAPESTRY OF DESTINY.
FINDING THEM WILL TAKE TIME, BUT MY BENEFACTOR WILL PROVIDE...
...EVEN AS HE GAVE ME USE OF THIS CREATURE.
KILL THEM.
YOUR MASTER DOES YOU NO FAVOR, LENDING YOU SUCH INCREDIBLE POWER. YOU'RE AN INFANT ATTEMPTING TO WIELD *EXCALIBUR*.
DEMONS OF SUCH POWER CANNOT *MANIFEST* IN THIS REALM FOR LONG. IT'S PART OF THE BALANCE YOU SEEK TO DESTROY.
THESE BEINGS MUST BE TETHERED TO AN OBJECT, SUCH AS YOUR STAFF.

YOU HOLD THE STAFF, SO IT DOES AS YOU COMMAND.
BUT WHAT IF I TRAPPED THE DEMON IN ANOTHER OBJECT?!
DO YOU FEEL IT, ZAEL? EXCALIBUR SLIPPING FROM YOUR TINY GRASP?
TIME TO PUT THE SWORD BACK IN THE STONE.
UHHHHN!
YAARGH!
I'M SORRY, BABY. IT WAS THE ONLY WAY. DON'T WORRY. I'LL ALWAYS WATCH OVER Y--

FLASH
THAT POOR FAMILY! WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? THAT... THING. GRACE!
I CAN'T CONTROL WHAT WE'RE SHOWN, BUT WE SHOULD HAVE RETURNED TO THE CHAMBER. THIS IS VERY UNUSUAL...
I REMEMBER! THIS HAS HAPPENED THREE TIMES BEFORE.
I THINK WE'RE GOING TO BE SHOWN A POSSIBLE FUTURE! QUICKLY! JOIN HANDS!

BARD, YOU WERE RIGHT! IT WAS A MISTAKE TO COME HERE. HE USED US TO REVEAL ONE OF THE PILLARS OF THE BETWEEN!
LET'S RECAP LATER, OKAY!?
BOOM BOOM
DO WE HAVE A PLAN? STABBITY'S ALMOST OUT OF ENERGY.
WE COULD BLEND OUR LIGHTNING ATTACKS!
I'LL TRY, BUT THE WIND SPIRIT OF THE BETWEEN DOESN'T LIKE ME VERY MUCH.
WE'RE REALLY MORE OF AN IMPROV GROUP ANYWAY.

HE'S COMING UP FAST! BIG BAD WILL POP UP AT ABOUT 1:00 FROM ME. GET READY! YOU HAVE ABOUT THREE SECONDS!
BOOM BOOM
ONE!
TWO!
THREE!

KHOOM
YES! THAT WAS AHH-MAZING! THE BIGGER THEY ARE...
GRRRRARRRRR
...THE MORE TIMES THEY GET UP...
NOW UP TO BAT... BARD! THE CROWD GOES WILD!
BARD, WAIT! LET'S MAKE THIS COUNT. I HAVE AN IDEA!
IN THIS REALM, THE EARTH SPIRIT REALLY LIKES YOU, RIGHT?
HE'LL HELP US AS MUCH AS THE COVENANT ALLOWS.

I'LL PUT A SPELL BOMB IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT THING, AND GRACE, YOU DO THAT STOMPING ATTACK TO SET IT OFF. I THINK WE CAN WEAKEN IT ENOUGH TO WHERE BARD CAN SHATTER IT.
WHEN YOU FEEL THE GROUND START TO RUMBLE, JUMP HIGH!
KABOOM
RRRUMBLE!
GIARRRL?!

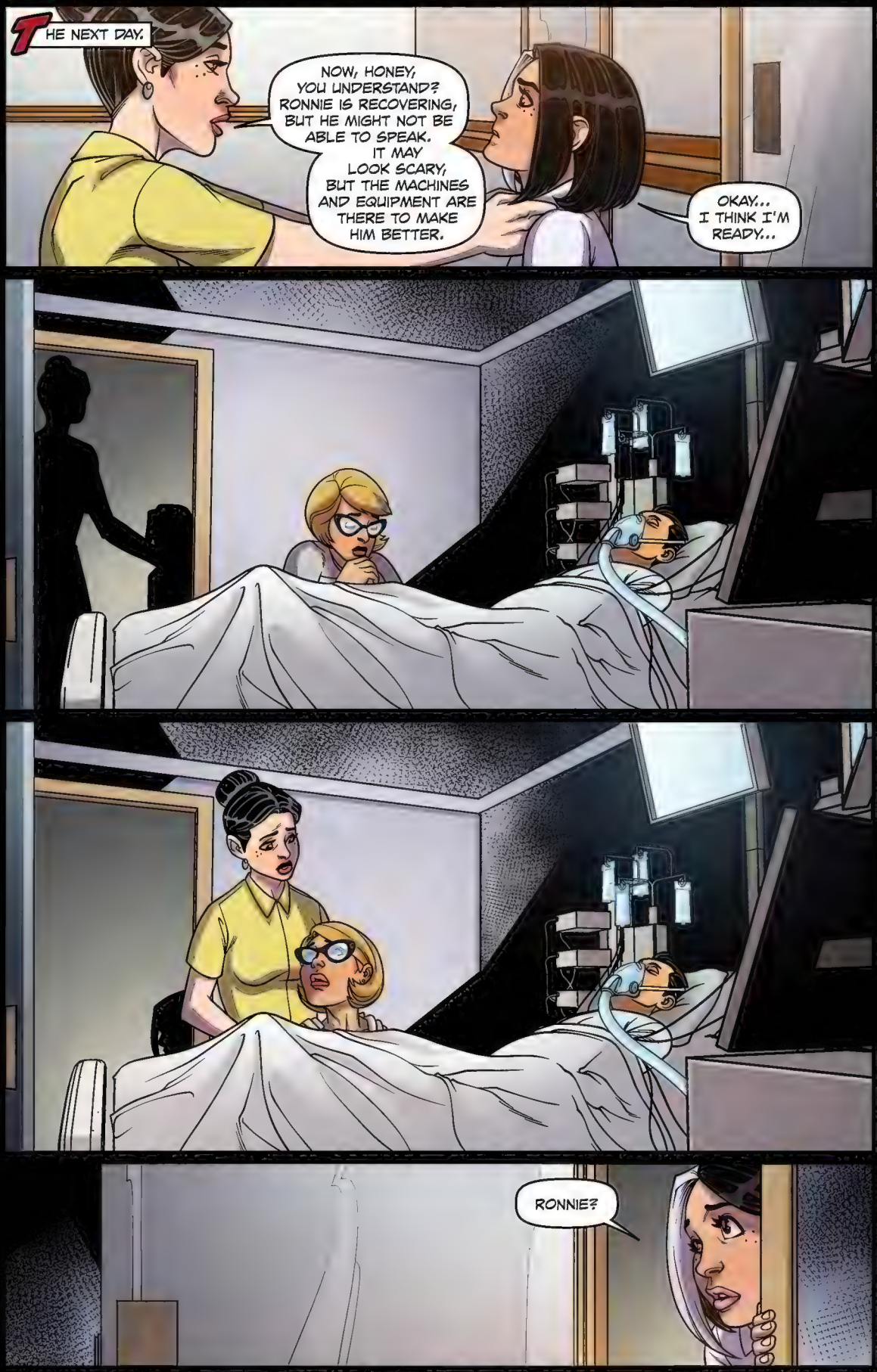
WOW.
THAT WAS GRACE? WHO WERE THOSE OTHER KIDS? WHERE WERE THEY?!
THAT WAS SO AWESOME! DID YOU SEE HOW COOL I LOOKED?!
LET'S TAKE A MOMENT TO COLLECT OUR THOUGHTS. THERE IS... A LOT... TO PROCESS.
I'LL BE ABLE TO SHOOT LIGHTNING?!
HONEY, RIGHT NOW, THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT. WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT--
ABOUT HOW SUPER COOL I LOOKED?
HEY!
SORRY, I FORGOT I STILL HAD MY EMERGENCY PHONE ON ME.
BZZT BZZT

MAY I?
SURE, WHY NOT?
HELLO? TESS! WHAT'S WRONG?!
OH, NO! WHICH HOSPITAL?! WE'RE IN D.C., BUT WE'LL BE THERE TONIGHT.
WE'LL BE THERE SOON, DEAR. IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY. I'LL CALL YOU BACK WHEN WE'RE DRIVING.
IS RONNIE OKAY?
HE'S IN THE HOSPITAL, HONEY. THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT. IT'S VERY SERIOUS.

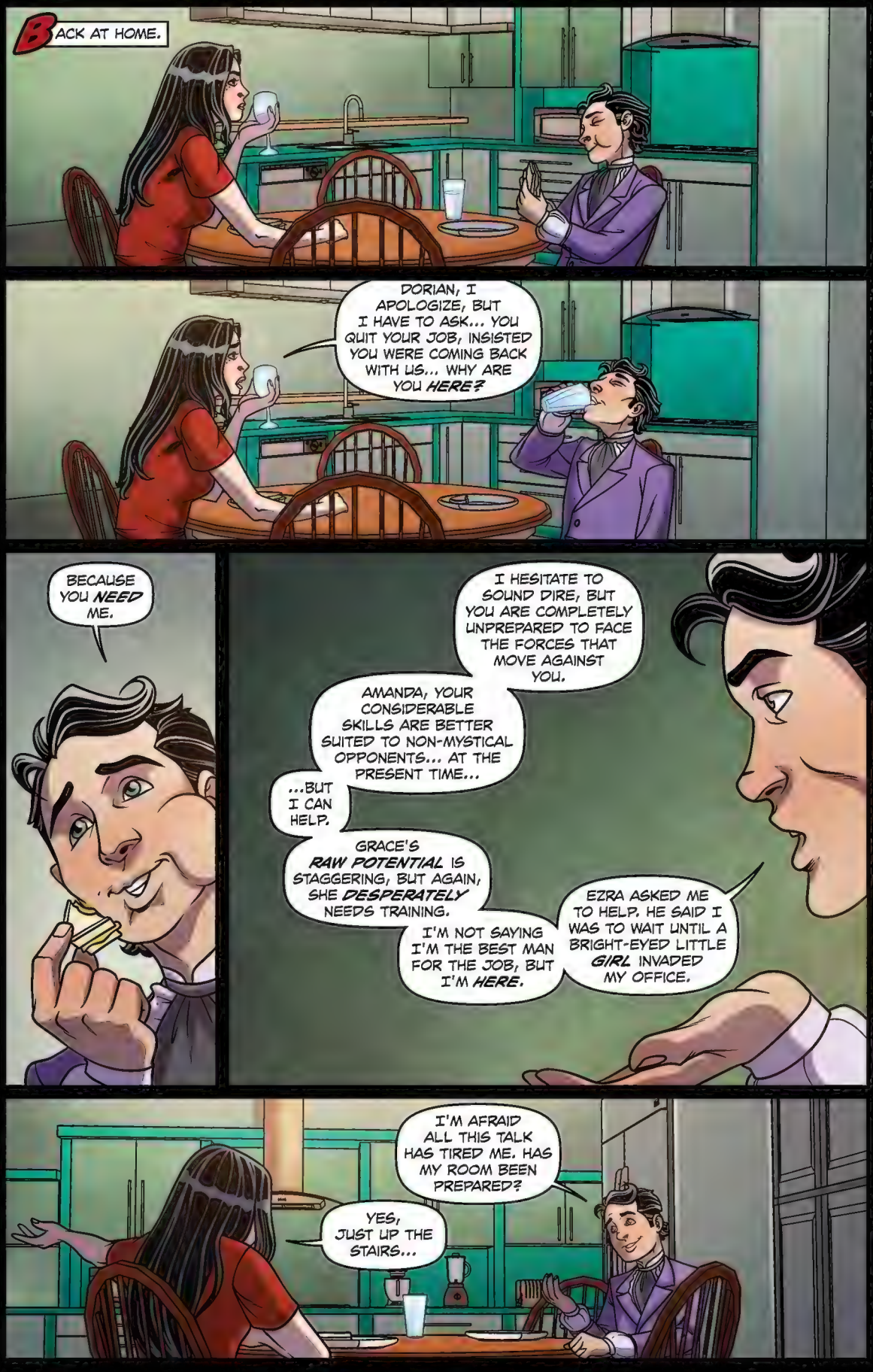
CHAPTER 3

WE'RE LOSING HIM.
EEEEEEEEEEEEEE

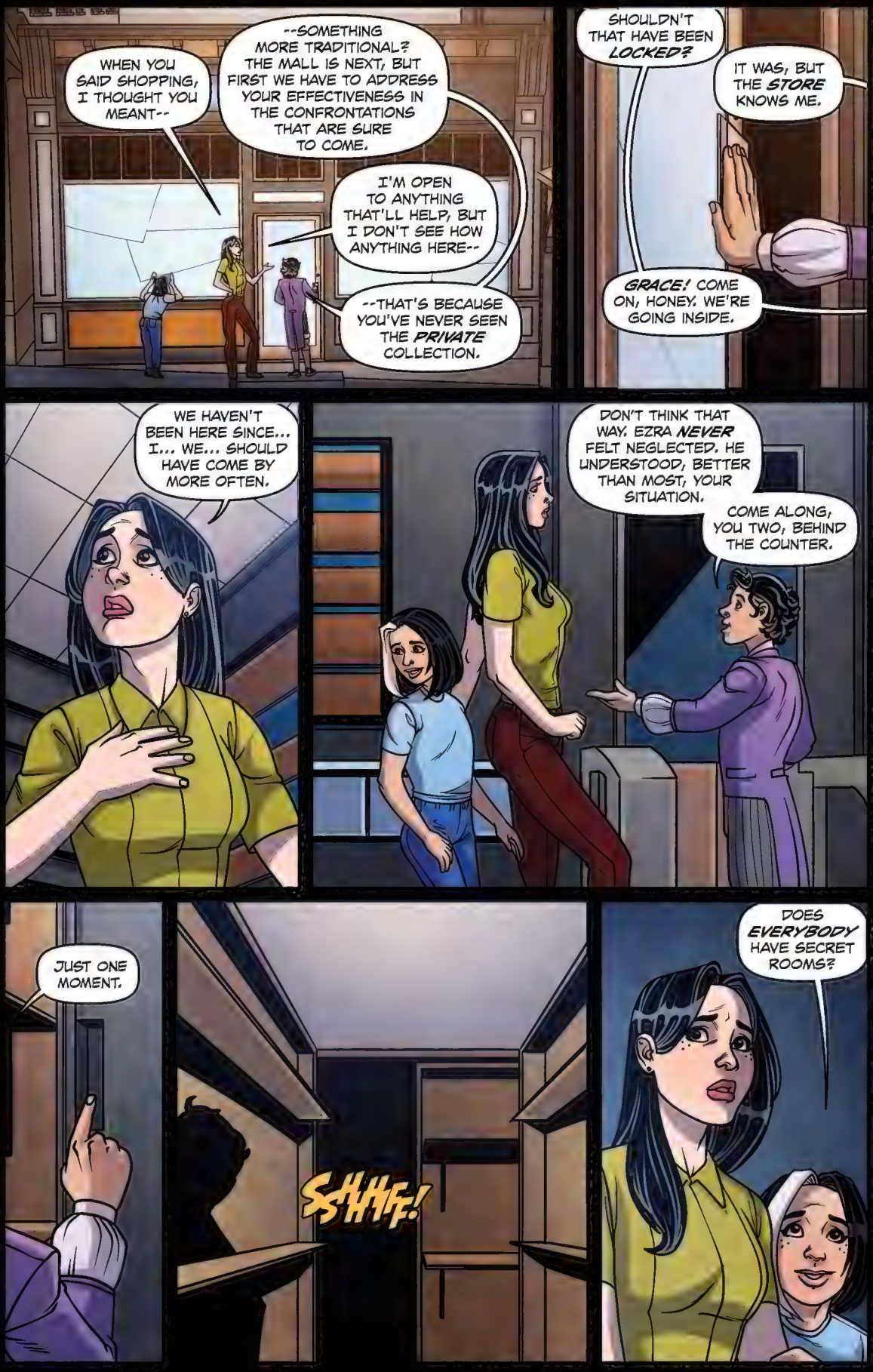
HE'S GOING TO BE OKAY. HE'S RECOVERING FROM THE FINAL SURGERY. YOU KNOW WE'RE HERE FOR YOU. WHATEVER YOU NEED.
RONNIE JUST NEEDS LOVE AND TIME TO RECOVER.
WHO COULD DO THIS? RUN INTO A LITTLE BOY, JUST WALKING ON THE SIDEWALK, HIT HIM AND JUST DRIVE OFF?
IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR MRS. PIAZZA SEEING THE WHOLE THING, HELPING RONNIE. IF SHE HADN'T CALLED THAT AMBULANCE...
WHAT KIND OF A MONSTER COULD DO THAT?
THANK GOODNESS FOR MRS. PIAZZA. SHE SAW THE DRIVER? HE NEVER EVEN HIT HIS BRAKES?!
THE POLICE CAN'T FIND ANYTHING. NO TREADMARKS, NO OTHER WITNESSES...
I'M SORRY, WE SHOULDN'T EVEN BE TALKING ABOUT THIS. LET'S JUST CONCENTRATE ON RONNIE AND HIS RECOVERY. HE'S GOING TO BE FINE.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
MOMMY...
YES, GRACE. WE CAN SEE RONNIE, BUT IT WILL BE TOMORROW. THANK YOU FOR BEING SUCH A BIG GIRL.
TOMORROW! THAT'S. AWESOME. I'LL BRING HIM THE NEW FLASH!


THE NEXT DAY.
NOW, HONEY, YOU UNDERSTAND? RONNIE IS RECOVERING, BUT HE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO SPEAK. IT MAY LOOK SCARY, BUT THE MACHINES AND EQUIPMENT ARE THERE TO MAKE HIM BETTER.
OKAY... I THINK I'M READY...
RONNIE?

RONNIE.
I WENT TO THE COMIC BOOK STORE AND GOT YOU THE NEW FLASH!
IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S AWESOME... THE COVER IS... AWESOME.
DON'T WORRY. I DIDN'T READ IT YET.
IT'S BETTER WHEN WE READ IT TOGETHER...
I'LL COME SEE YOU EVERY DAY!
BET YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE IN HERE LONG ANYWAY.
I THINK... I THINK... WE NEED MORE THAN BAND-AIDS.


BACK AT HOME.
DORIAN, I APOLOGIZE, BUT I HAVE TO ASK... YOU QUIT YOUR JOB, INSISTED YOU WERE COMING BACK WITH US... WHY ARE YOU HERE?
BECAUSE YOU NEED ME.
I HESITATE TO SOUND DIRE, BUT YOU ARE COMPLETELY UNPREPARED TO FACE THE FORCES THAT MOVE AGAINST YOU.
AMANDA, YOUR CONSIDERABLE SKILLS ARE BETTER SUITED TO NON-MYSTICAL OPPONENTS... AT THE PRESENT TIME...
...BUT I CAN HELP.
GRACE'S RAW POTENTIAL IS STAGGERING, BUT AGAIN, SHE DESPERATELY NEEDS TRAINING.
I'M NOT SAYING I'M THE BEST MAN FOR THE JOB, BUT I'M HERE.
EZRA ASKED ME TO HELP. HE SAID I WAS TO WAIT UNTIL A BRIGHT-EYED LITTLE GIRL INVADED MY OFFICE.
I'M AFRAID ALL THIS TALK HAS TIRED ME. HAS MY ROOM BEEN PREPARED?
YES, JUST UP THE STAIRS...

SEVERAL WEEKS OF HOSPITAL VISITS LATER...
YOU BAKED ALL THIS OVERNIGHT? IT'S LOVELY... SO NICE OF YOU, DORIAN.
NOW YOU'RE MAKING OMELETTES?!
I COULD GET USED TO THIS.
I DON'T SLEEP, SO I HAD PLENTY OF TIME ON MY HANDS.
YOUR HOSPITALITY HAS BEEN MORE THAN GRACIOUS THESE PAST FEW WEEKS.
HAPPY TO DO IT.
I JUST HOPE EVERYTHING IS TO YOUR LIKING.
YOU SAID EARLIER, YOU HAVE OUR DAY PLANNED?
I DID!
CARE TO READ US INTO THE MISSION?
THANK YOU. IT LOOKS... VERY... WARM.
MY PLEASURE.
AMANDA, GRACE... WE'RE GOING SHOPPING!


WHEN YOU SAID SHOPPING, I THOUGHT YOU MEANT--
--SOMETHING MORE TRADITIONAL? THE MALL IS NEXT, BUT FIRST WE HAVE TO ADDRESS YOUR EFFECTIVENESS IN THE CONFRONTATIONS THAT ARE SURE TO COME.
I'M OPEN TO ANYTHING THAT'LL HELP, BUT I DON'T SEE HOW ANYTHING HERE--
--THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN THE PRIVATE COLLECTION.
SHOULDN'T THAT HAVE BEEN LOCKED?
IT WAS, BUT THE STORE KNOWS ME.
GRACE! COME ON, HONEY. WE'RE GOING INSIDE.
WE HAVEN'T BEEN HERE SINCE... I... WE... SHOULD HAVE COME BY MORE OFTEN.
DON'T THINK THAT WAY. EZRA NEVER FELT NEGLECTED. HE UNDERSTOOD, BETTER THAN MOST, YOUR SITUATION.
COME ALONG, YOU TWO, BEHIND THE COUNTER.
JUST ONE MOMENT.
SHHHF!
DOES EVERYBODY HAVE SECRET ROOMS?

THIS IS THE FIRST CHAMBER, THE ARMORY AND HAUNTED ITEMS PORTION OF THE COLLECTION.
PLEASE *DON'T* TOUCH ANYTHING WITHOUT ASKING ME FIRST.
HOW MANY CHAMBERS?
SEVEN, I THINK, OR AT LEAST, THAT'S ALL I'VE FOUND SO FAR.
THERE IS ONE THING WE NEED IN HERE, BUT THE MAJORITY OF OUR LIST WE'LL FIND IN SPECIALTY ITEMS AND CURSED JEWELRY.
LET'S GET STARTED!

SOMEWHERE IN A QUIET HOLIDAY NEIGHBORHOOD...
PIZZA'S HERE!
PIZZZAAA!
OH YEAH.
I FORGOT.
I'LL GET IT...

FINISH THAT. WE'RE GOING *OUT.*
DO YOU PLAN TO CLEAN THAT UP?
MAYBE, SOMETIME, BUT I STILL HAVE TWO OTHER CUSHIONS. I'LL *THINK* ABOUT IT.
I EXPECTED *SOME* LACK OF *AMBITION*, OF COURSE, GIVEN THE PARTICULAR *SIN* YOU MANIFEST.
HOWEVER, I NEED YOU TO ACCOMPLISH THIS ONE *TASK* TODAY. CAN YOU DO THAT FOR ME?
HEHEHE, THAT CAN'T BE A *REAL* KITTEN...
PERHAPS THE EXCITEMENT OF THE JTP MALL WILL PERK YOU UP.

DON'T *FORGET!* WE'RE GOING TO THE HOSPITAL *FIRST*, AND *THEN* THE MALL. RONNIE NEEDS HIS BAND-AID.
AS YOU COMMAND, PRINCESS. BE *CAREFUL* WITH THAT, HONEY. IT LOOKS EXPENSIVE.
OH, THAT TIARA? NO. IT'S COSTUME JEWELRY, MORE TOURIST ITEM THAN TREASURE...
...UNLIKE THE ACCESSORIES WE PICKED OUT FOR YOU, WHICH ARE PRICELESS ARTIFACTS.
MAYBE I SHOULDN'T BE WEARING THEM UNTIL THEY'RE *NEEDED*. WE HAVE A SAFE AT HOME.
NO. YOU'VE *BEEN* WEARING THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE SET FOR YEARS, NOW THE RINGS NEED A CHANCE TO BOND WITH YOU.
BESIDES, YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU'LL NEED THEIR POWER.

ALLLMOSST GOT IT...
THERE! YOUR DAILY BAND-AID!
THANK YOU, NURSE--
--DOCTOR!
SORRY! DOCTOR GRACE.
PATIENT IS GETTING BETTER, BUT CHECK FOR HIGH LEVELS OF SMARTYPANTSNESS.
JUST SAYIN', DOCTORS DON'T PUT ON THE BAND-AIDS...
SERIOUSLY, YOU LOOK SO MUCH BETTER.
IT'S THE BAND-AIDS... THE HOSPITAL STUFF, TOO, I GUESS... BUT YEAH, I... THANKS, GRACE.
YOU'LL FEEL EVEN BETTER TOMORROW. WE'RE GOING TO THE MALL LATER... AND THE COMIC STORE HAS A NEW... 100-PAGE... FLASH SPECIAL!
OHHHHH, MANNN, THAT'S AWESOME!

I THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE IT HERE. WE CAN GO TO TECH HUT AND GET SOMETHING FOR THAT DEVICE YOU WORSHIP.
MALLS WERE COOL ABOUT A MILLION YEARS AGO... I CAN ORDER STUFF ONLINE... AND WHO KNEW THERE WERE ANY TECH HUTS STILL AROUND?
IT'S A PERFECTLY *FINE* STORE. PEOPLE BUY COMPUTERS AND OTHER... GADGETS THERE.
MAYBE MY *GRANDMA* DID.
WE SHOULD KEEP MOVING.
YOU KNOW, YOU CAN CONTROL YOUR POWER. YOU CAN EVEN TURN IT OFF.
YEAHHHH, I GUESS, BUT... *WHY?* IT'S A LOT OF WORK.
NOT EVERYONE IS *IMMUNE* TO YOUR ABILITIES AS I AM.
THAT'S THE *POINT*, ISN'T IT?

THANK YOU FOR THIS... FOR TODAY. IT ACTUALLY *FELT* LIKE A *SATURDAY.* SURE, A VERY *UNUSUAL* SATURDAY, BUT STILL... GRACE IS THE HAPPIEST I'VE SEEN HER SINCE...
SORRY I DIDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT THE HIDDEN COLLECTIONS *BEFORE*, BUT YOU BOTH TOOK EVERYTHING IN STRIDE.
SHE'S REMARKABLE, JUST LIKE HER MOTHER.
WHEN THE OGRE RUSHED US, I THOUGHT WE WERE IN FOR A FIGHT! *HEH!*
NO, OLLIE IS A SWEETHEART. HE WAS JUST EXCITED MEETING YOU TWO. *HA HA!* GRACE LOOKED LIKE A LITTLE BIRD PERCHED ON HIS SHOULDER.
YOU SURE YOU'RE UP FOR THE MALL ON A WEEKEND?
I LOOK FORWARD TO IT! THERE'S A LEMON JULIA IN THE FOOD COURT!
IF YOU WANT TO ENJOY YOUR SLUSHY IN PEACE, WE'D BETTER GO TO THE *COMIC BOOK STORE* FIRST. GRACE IS ON A MISSION FOR *RONNIE!*
WE SHOULD PROBABLY GET GOING BEFORE SHE WEARS HIM OUT.
TO THE MALL!

WHY DO I HAVE TO OPEN A SAUCE PACKET AND DIP EACH BITE?
CAN'T THEY JUST TOSS 'EM IN THE BBQ, LIKE THEY DO WINGS... BUT THEN I'VE GOT BONES TO DEAL WITH...
YES... TRAGIC, REALLY. YOU DO KNOW THE PLAN?
AFTER I LEAVE, YOU INCREASE THE POWER AND RANGE OF THE FIELD.
OHHHH... AFTER YOU LEAVE... MY BAD.
THE GEEK EXPERIENCE
THERE YOU GO! THANK YOU.
Shirts
THANK YOU! RONNIE IS GOING TO LOVE THESE!
I'M SURE HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO'LL ENJOY THEMMMMM.
AMANDA!
MOMMY!

MOVE EVERYBODY TO THE BACK OF THE STORE... AS FAR AWAY FROM THE ENTRANCE AS POSSIBLE.
MOMMY, ARE YOU OKAY? WHAT'S WRONG?
S'GONNA BE FINNNE, HONNNEYY.
WHAT'S HAPPENING? ARE YOU HURT?
I... JUSS NEED... TO CATCH... MY BREATH.
IT'S GLYPH AND HIS NEWEST PAWN. HE'S BEEN SPYING ON US ALL DAY.
I SHOULD BE ABLE TO STOP THEM. GRACE, STAY HERE AND WATCH OVER YOUR MOTHER.
IF I'M NOT BACK IN A FEW MINUTES... YOU SHOULD CALL UPON YOUR LONG-EARED FRIEND.
COWARDS! ATTACKING THESE INNOCENT CHILDREN, CHOOSING OPPONENTS WHO CAN'T FIGHT BACK...
TRY ME!
SLRRP!

THOOM

KKSSH!

FWAAM!

YOU'VE GAINED CONSIDERABLE POWER SINCE WE LAST MET, BUT YOU'VE LOST SOMETHING OF FAR GREATER VALUE.
WHY WOULD YOU *STRIKE* SUCH A BARGAIN, GLYPH?
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL...
... STILL *ARROGANT.* STILL INSUFFERABLY SELF-RIGHTEOUS. I'M GOING TO *ENJOY* THIS.
CRRRKK
CRRICK
YOU DON'T HAVE THIS KIND OF POWER.
NO, BUT...
CRRRKK
CRRICK
...SHE DOES.
JERK. SPILLED MY NUGGETS.

THAT KID WAS KICKING YOUR BUTT.
I HAD A PLAN, BUT YOUR WAY WAS QUICKER... AND WONDERFULLY HUMILIATING.
THEY'RE IN THE STORE. DO YOU REMEMBER MY INSTRUCTIONS... ANY QUESTIONS?
ARE YOU LISTENING?! YOU ONLY GET ONE CHANCE...
REFILL?
ONE REFILL LATER.

DON'T WORRY, HONEY. I'M GLAD YOU CALLED STABBITY.
HE... WELL, I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE DID... BUT I'M FINE.
THEN MAYBE HE SHOULD BE--
--WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT... LATER.
SHE'S COMING!
YOU'RE SURE, RIGHT? THIS IS THE ONE WE HAVE TO STOP?
THAT'S HER.

STOP RIGHT THERE. WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
HMMMMMMPH...
HUHHH...
...

NOPE.
HEH. LOOK AT THAT...
SLRP!
CLUNK!
Shirt

CHAPTER 4: EMMET'S STORY

EVENING... MAN, IT GOT COLD OUT HERE. CAN'T WAIT TO GET HOME.
GET HOME TO YOUR HUSSSBAND?
I APOLOGIZE, BUT DO I KNOW YOU, BUD? I'M USUALLY PRETTY GOOD WITH FACES.
NAHH, YOU DON'T KNOW ME. THAT'S FOR DAMN SURE!

OKAY.
WELL, I B-BEST BE GETTING A MOVE ON.
SAFE TRAVELS, MISTER.
YOU AIN'T GOIN' NOWHERE.
LISTEN, I-I DON'T HAVE MUCH, BUT YOU CAN HAVE MY WALLET, MY PHONE, WHATEVER YOU *WANT*.
I DON'T *WANT* NOTHIN' *YOU* GOT...
...WE JUST WANNA TALK.
NO, FELLAS, PLEASE... IF I DID ANYTHING, I'M SORRY.
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU *DID*, CUZ, IT'S WHAT YOU ARE.

OLICE

THE DOCTOR WILL BE OUT SOON, HE'S ONE OF THE BEST. ALL THE STAFF IN THE ICU ARE TOP NOTCH.
GARY, LISTEN, I'M SORRY ABOUT EARLIER...
DON'T APOLOGIZE. YOUR HUSBAND IS IN THERE, I GET IT.
MR. GUTHRIE?
DOCTOR! HOW'S WALLY?! IS HE GOING TO BE OKAY?
MR. GUTHRIE, I'M DOCTOR SHARMA. PLEASE, LET'S SIT.
THANK YOU, GARY.
SURE, YEAH. THANKS, MAN.
ANYTIME, EMMET, DOC. I'LL BE AROUND IF YOU NEED ME.
WALLY SUFFERED SERIOUS INJURIES, BUT HE'S STABILIZED. SURGERY IS SCHEDULED FOR LATER THIS MORNING.
HE HASN'T REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS, SO WE'LL NEED YOU TO SIGN THE CONSENT FORMS...

"I'M LISTENING, DOC, TO EVERY WORD, BUT THERE'S SO MUCH I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
"IT'S ALL I CAN DO TO JUST SIT HERE. I NEED TO BE WITH WALLY. PLEASE, JUST STOP TALKING!
"DOC, DON'T WORRY SO MUCH ABOUT ME. I KNOW IT'S BAD. I UNDERSTAND. OH, GOD."
WALLY!

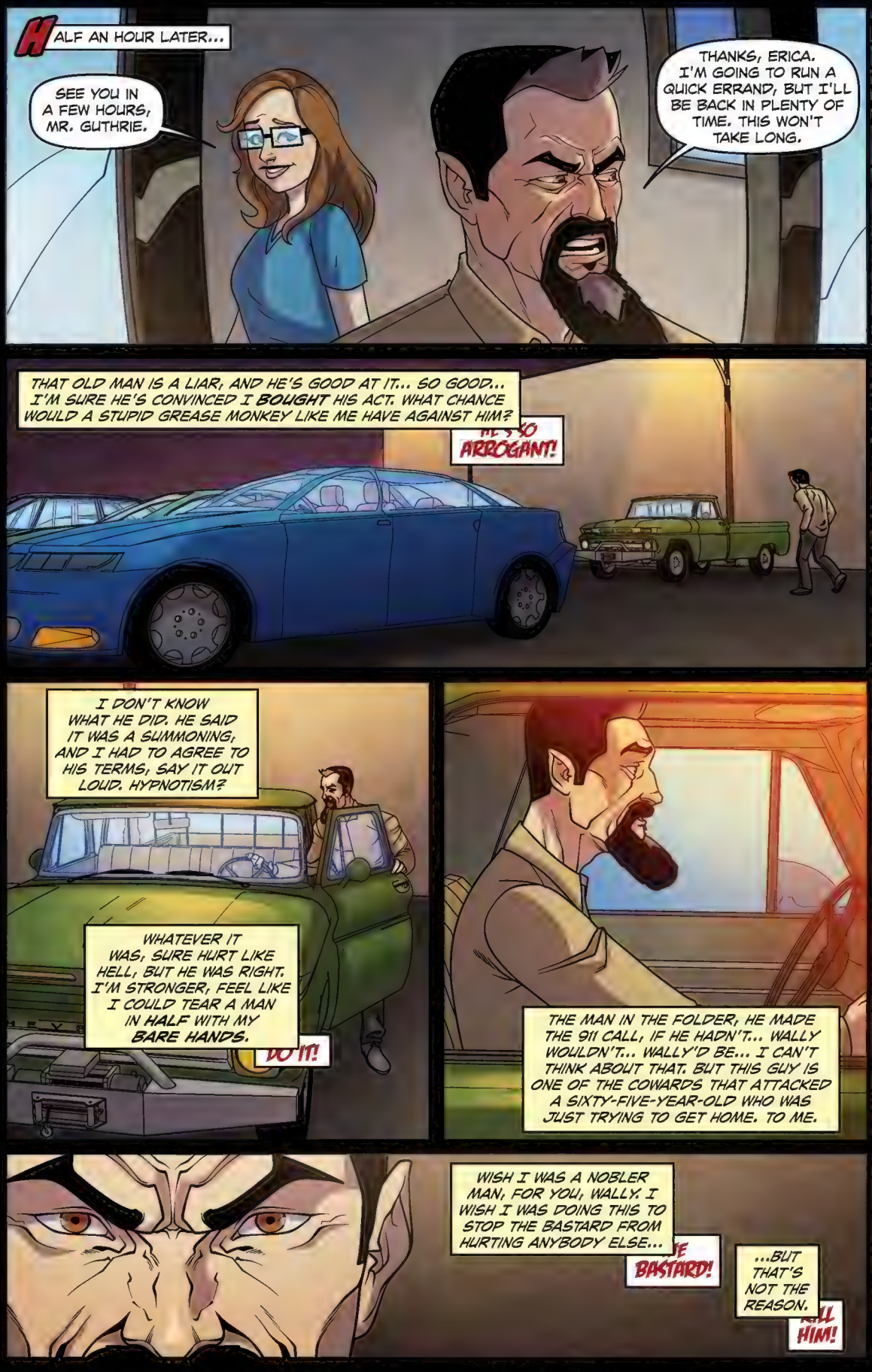
OH, WALLY...
...I'M HERE.
I'M HERE, BABY...

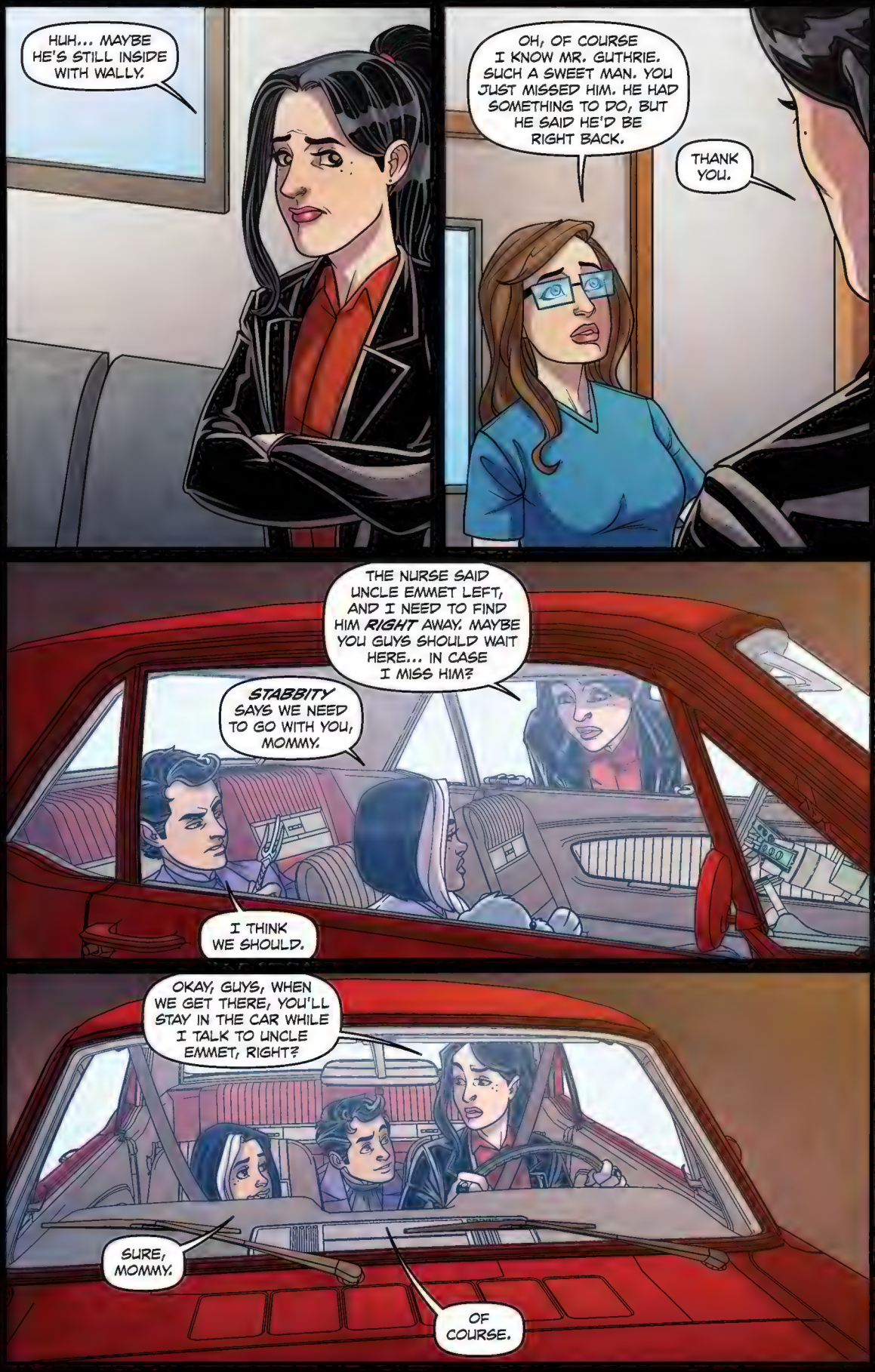
BEAR
NSIDE
EMMET, CAN WE TALK?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOUR FRIENDS DID... WHAT?
WELL, I ASKED FRIENDS FROM... MY OLD JOB... TO FIND THE ANONYMOUS CALLER.
HE USED A PAYPHONE, OUTSIDE OF A BAR NEAR THE TRUCK STOP, THAT NIGHT.
THEY PULLED PICTURES FROM AN ATM CAMERA THAT FACES THE PARKING LOT.
YOU'VE GOT PICTURES?! WHO IS HE?
THE QUALITY WAS REALLY POOR, BUT ONCE IT WAS ENHANCED, THEY HAD ENOUGH TO PULL TOGETHER HIS PROFILE.
HE DRIVES LONG HAUL, BUT WHENEVER HE'S IN TOWN OVERNIGHT, HE'S AT THAT BAR.
I WANTED TO KNOW... IF YOU'D LIKE ME TO TALK TO HIM.
NO? NO, I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD BE DOING ANYTHING.
THE POLICE SHOULD GET THIS INFORMATION.
I DON'T WANT YOU GETTING HURT.
OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.
WHY DON'T YOU THINK ABOUT IT, AND I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW NIGHT.

WALLY, AMANDA BROUGHT ME A FOLDER.
SHE'S TRACKED DOWN ONE OF THE COWARDS THAT... THAT DID THIS TO YOU. I KNOW HIS NAME.
I KNOW WHERE HE'LL BE TONIGHT.
THE REASON I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING BEFORE IS BECAUSE AMANDA, SHE WANTS TO...
WELL... LET'S JUST SAY I HAVEN'T SEEN THAT LOOK IN HER EYES FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
I WAS THINKING WE SHOULD GO TO THE POLICE, BUT THERE'S NOT ENOUGH EVIDENCE FOR THEM TO ARREST HIM.
AMANDA'S *SURE* THIS IS THE GUY. WHAT SHOULD I DO?
MOSTLY, I AGREE. LET THE POLICE HANDLE IT, BUT HE DID THIS, AND WHAT IF THEY CAN'T...
...WHAT IF THEY CAN'T *DO* ANYTHING? WHAT IF HE GETS AWAY BECAUSE OF ME?
PART OF ME WANTS TO HURT HIM. PART OF ME WANTS TO *KILL* THAT BAS--
--YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO *THAT* PART.

THAT'S THE PART OF YOU WHO KNOWS WHAT MUST BE DONE. THE POLICE CAN'T TOUCH HIM, BUT YOU CAN, EMMET.
IT'S UP TO YOU.
WHEN I SEE WHAT THAT MONSTER DID TO WALLY, MY HEART BREAKS... FOR YOU BOTH.
WE SPOKE BEFORE, AT YOUR GARAGE MONTHS AGO.
YOU DECLINED MY OFFER, BUT I COULD SENSE, EVEN THEN... YOU WERE TEMPTED... AND NOW, WELL...
...IF ONLY YOU HAD THE POWER TO MAKE HIM PAY, TO HURT HIM, LIKE HE HURT WALLY.
THAT COWARD AND HIS HATE-FILLED FRIENDS NEARLY KILLED YOUR HUSBAND...
AMANDA MEANS WELL, BUT DO YOU WANT TO TAKE THE CHANCE... WHAT IF SHE'S INJURED... OR WORSE?
NO, THIS MAN CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO HARM ANYONE ELSE, AND THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON WHO CAN GIVE HIM WHAT HE DESERVES...


HALF AN HOUR LATER...
SEE YOU IN A FEW HOURS, MR. GUTHRIE.
THANKS, ERICA. I'M GOING TO RUN A QUICK ERRAND, BUT I'LL BE BACK IN PLENTY OF TIME. THIS WON'T TAKE LONG.
THAT OLD MAN IS A LIAR, AND HE'S GOOD AT IT... SO GOOD... I'M SURE HE'S CONVINCED I BOUGHT HIS ACT. WHAT CHANCE WOULD A STUPID GREASE MONKEY LIKE ME HAVE AGAINST HIM?
ARROGANT!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE DID. HE SAID IT WAS A SUMMONING, AND I HAD TO AGREE TO HIS TERMS, SAY IT OUT LOUD. HYPNOTISM?
WHATEVER IT WAS, SURE HURT LIKE HELL, BUT HE WAS RIGHT. I'M STRONGER, FEEL LIKE I COULD TEAR A MAN IN HALF WITH MY BARE HANDS.
DO IT!
THE MAN IN THE FOLDER, HE MADE THE 911 CALL, IF HE HADN'T... WALLY WOULDN'T... WALLY'D BE... I CAN'T THINK ABOUT THAT. BUT THIS GUY IS ONE OF THE COWARDS THAT ATTACKED A SIXTY-FIVE-YEAR-OLD WHO WAS JUST TRYING TO GET HOME. TO ME.
WISH I WAS A NOBLER MAN, FOR YOU, WALLY. I WISH I WAS DOING THIS TO STOP THE BASTARD FROM HURTING ANYBODY ELSE...
BASTARD!
...BUT THAT'S NOT THE REASON.
HIM!


HUH... MAYBE HE'S STILL INSIDE WITH WALLY.
OH, OF COURSE I KNOW MR. GUTHRIE. SUCH A SWEET MAN. YOU JUST MISSED HIM. HE HAD SOMETHING TO DO, BUT HE SAID HE'D BE RIGHT BACK.
THANK YOU.
THE NURSE SAID UNCLE EMMET LEFT, AND I NEED TO FIND HIM *RIGHT* AWAY. MAYBE YOU GUYS SHOULD WAIT HERE... IN CASE I MISS HIM?
STABBITY SAYS WE NEED TO GO WITH YOU, MOMMY.
I THINK WE SHOULD.
OKAY, GUYS, WHEN WE GET THERE, YOU'LL STAY IN THE CAR WHILE I TALK TO UNCLE EMMET, RIGHT?
SURE, MOMMY.
OF COURSE.

MAN, ALL THOSE EMPTY SHOT GLASSES YOURS? THAT'S WHAT, TEN OF 'EM?!
YESSSSITS... IT... IT'S BEEN... A BAD WEEK... BEEN REALLY BAD WEEK.
TWO MORE SHHHLOGGERS! NO! THREE! ONE FUR MAH NEW FRIEND HERE.
THANKS, BUD. 'PPRECIATE IT.
NO =GULP= PROBLEM.
FIRST ONE'S THE HARDEST, BUT BURNS SO GOOD!
DAMN, I THINK I NEED ME ANOTHER ONE... JUST TO SEE IF THE TASTE GETS ANY BETTER...
YEAHHH... ME, TOO... LEMME GET--
--NO, BUD. MY TURN!
MIND ME ASKIN' WHAT'S GOT YOU DOWN?

MANY SHOTS LATER.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THOSE OTHER GUYS GOT YOU INVOLVED *COUGH* IN SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
DAMN, MAN, YOU NEED TO... FIND BETTER FRIENDS... :COUGH: DO THEY DRIVE THROUGH HERE A LOT?
I KNOW, RIGHT?! IT REALLY MESSED ME UP. I THOUGHT WE WERE JUST GONNA MESS WITH HIM, YOU KNOW... SCARE THE GUY...
COUGH!
COUGH!
...BUT WE REALLY HURT HIM BAD. I DON'T KNOW.
I CAN STILL HEAR THE SOUNDS HE MADE. HE WAS BEGGIN' US... HEY, MAN, YOU OKAY?
SOMETHIN' GO DOWN WRONG, BUDDY?
YEAH...
COUGH!
COUGH!
THAT GUY HAS A NAME...
...HIS NAME IS WALLY!

WALLY--
GAHK!
KILL YOU!
HE'LL TELL ME. THE OTHER BASTARDS... THEIR NAMES AND WHERE TO FIND THEM.
KILL HIM! KILL THEM!
NO, NO, I ONLY WANT TO FRIGHTEN HIM, FIND THE OTHERS, CAN'T--
KILL HIM NOW! KILL THE OTHERS! NO ONE CAN STOP YOU!
I'LL KIL THEM ALL!
STOP! I WON'T--

MOMMY, ARE WE GOING INSIDE?
NO, WE AREN'T. I'LL BE GOING IN. ALONE. RIGHT, DORIAN?
YES, OF COURSE, IF THAT'S REALLY WHAT YOU--
--IT IS.
IT'S A PUBLIC PLACE, AND HE'LL BE FINE.
UNCLE EMMET, HE DESERVES A CHANCE TO DO THIS HIS WAY.
I'LL GO CHECK ON HIM. IF THERE'S ANY SIGN OF--
--TROUBLE...
KRASH!
TINK
TINK
DORIAN!
WE'RE COMING.
I'LL PROTECT GRACE.

YOU GUYS STAY BACK!
EMMET? ARE YOU--
--EMMET!?

EMMET, I NEED YOU TO HEAR ME. THIS MAN, HE DID SOMETHING HORRIBLE, SOMETHING UNTHINKABLE.
HE DESERVES TO BE PUNISHED. HE WILL BE PUNISHED, BUT NOT LIKE THIS.
I DON'T CARE IF HE GETS HURT, I DON'T CARE IF HE DIES, BUT I DO CARE ABOUT WHAT KILLING HIM WOULD DO TO YOU, EMMET.
AND YOU'RE HURTING OTHER PEOPLE, INNOCENT PEOPLE. THEY HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING TO DESERVE THIS...
...YOU HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING TO DESERVE THIS.
UNCLE EMMET, YOU'RE NOT YOURSELF. YOU NEED--
A-AMANDA... YOU... I NEED YOU...
...TO SHUT UP!
AAAAAAAA!

NOOO! UNCLE EMM--
EEEEE!
MOMMY!

UHN...UH...HUH... MOMMY... NOO!
GRACE, STABBITY... STAY HERE!
I'LL SAVE AMANDA...
...OR I'LL AVENGE HER!

DORIAN, WAIT!
AND YOU... YOU'RE NOT EMMET, BUT, HE'S STILL IN THERE, SOMEWHERE UNDER THE FLAMES.
HE'S A GOOD MAN. YOU COULDN'T KILL ME, AND YOU WON'T CONSUME HIM.
THE RINGS WORKED, DORIAN, JUST LIKE WE PRACTICED.
THEY PROTECTED ME AND ABSORBED HIS ATTACK. I WAS UNDER THE FLAMES, I COULD FEEL THE HEAT, BUT I DIDN'T BURN WHILE THE RINGS PREPARED A COUNTERATTACK.
IN THIS CASE... ICE!
THAT WON'T STOP HIM! I'M SORRY, BUT THIS ONLY ENDS ONE WAY--
--NO, WE HAVEN'T LOST HIM...
...YOU'LL SEE. HE'S IN THERE.

THE VESSEL WANTS TO CHANGE THE AGREEMENT?
IT WANTS TO RENEGE AFTER IT HAS ACCEPTED MY POWER? NO.
LET ME GO! I'D NEVER HURT... I'D NEVER KILL... NOT EVEN HIM!
IT LIES, KILLING THAT ONE WOULD PLEASE IT. IT JUST WANTS ME TO DO IT...
...BUT WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXTERMINATING ONE HUMAN OR ANOTHER... OR ALL OF THEM?
HE NEARLY BEAT WALLY TO DEATH! JUST BECAUSE... JUST BEC--
SAY IT!
BECAUSE WALLY LOVES ME.
THE CONTRACT... IT WAS MERELY A FORMALITY. I HAVE LIVED IN THE VESSEL FOR MOST OF ITS TINY LIFE. SAY IT.
IT'S NOT RIGHT! WHY SHOULD WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL... BE AFRAID TO HOLD HANDS...
...WORRY ABOUT HOW CLOSE WE SIT TOGETHER IN A RESTAURANT...
WHY DO WE HAVE TO EVEN THINK ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT?!
I LOVE WALLY MORE THAN I EVER THOUGHT I COULD LOVE ANYONE... AND I ALWAYS WILL.
WHY WOULD ANYONE HATE US... OR PITY US... OR MAKE ALLOWANCES FOR US... BECAUSE OF THAT?
WALLY DOESN'T WORRY ABOUT ALL THOSE THINGS.
WE'VE BEEN A COUPLE FOR ALMOST TWENTY YEARS.
HE'S NEVER SAID IT, BUT SOMETIMES I CAN SEE IT IN HIS EYES.
HE WISHES I'D JUST LIVE, BE LESS ANXIOUS, ENJOY OUR TIME TOGETHER... BUT I CAN'T...
... I WAS NEVER STRONG ENOUGH. MAYBE THAT'S WHY I FAILED.
I WAS TRYING TOO HARD, STRUGGLING, FIGHTING, AND FEELING GUILTY.
I COULDN'T BE MORE LIKE MY MAN.
I HOPE THAT SWORD DOESN'T HURT TOO BAD.

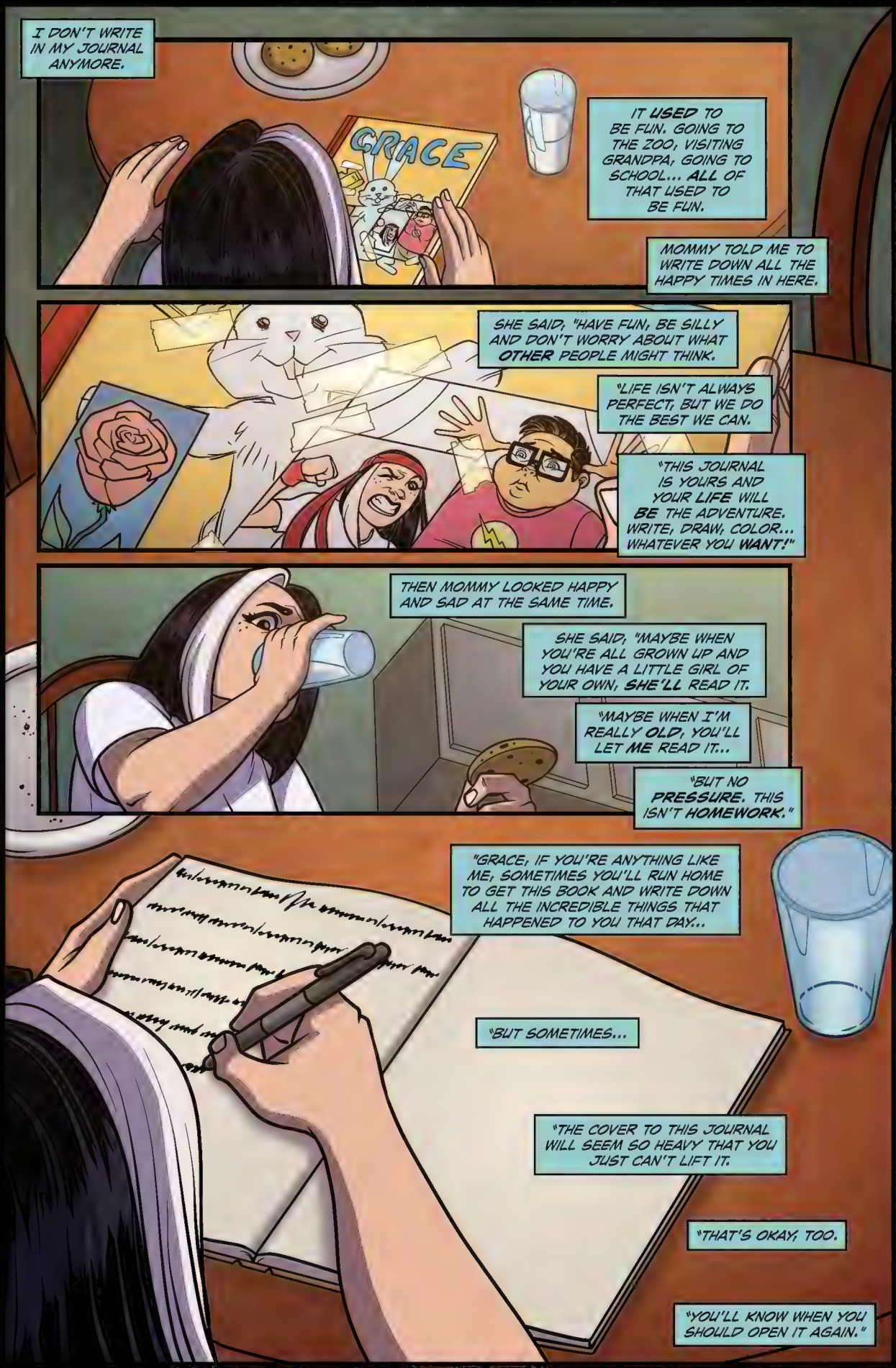
I WASN'T STRONG ENOUGH TO STOP IT, BUT I COULD DISTRACT WRATH LONG ENOUGH FOR DORIAN TO GET THE JOB DONE.
HIS SWORD CUTS DEEP, AND I CAN FEEL MYSELF LOSING CONSCIOUSNESS, BUT I'M NOT DYING ALONE. I CAN FEEL WRATH, OR WHATEVER IT IS, SCREAMING. SOMEHOW THAT ALMOST MAKES THIS OKAY.
I'M SORRY, WALLY. I LET YOU DOWN, BUT IT WAS FOR ALL THE RIGHT REASONS. AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT AT THE TIME. I MADE A MISTAKE. TIME TO SETTLE UP.
BABE, YOU WERE THE BEST PART OF MY LIFE.
I MAKE EYE CONTACT WITH AMANDA. SHE'S CRYING, BUT SHE NODS, AND I KNOW...
...IT'S OKAY TO LET GO.

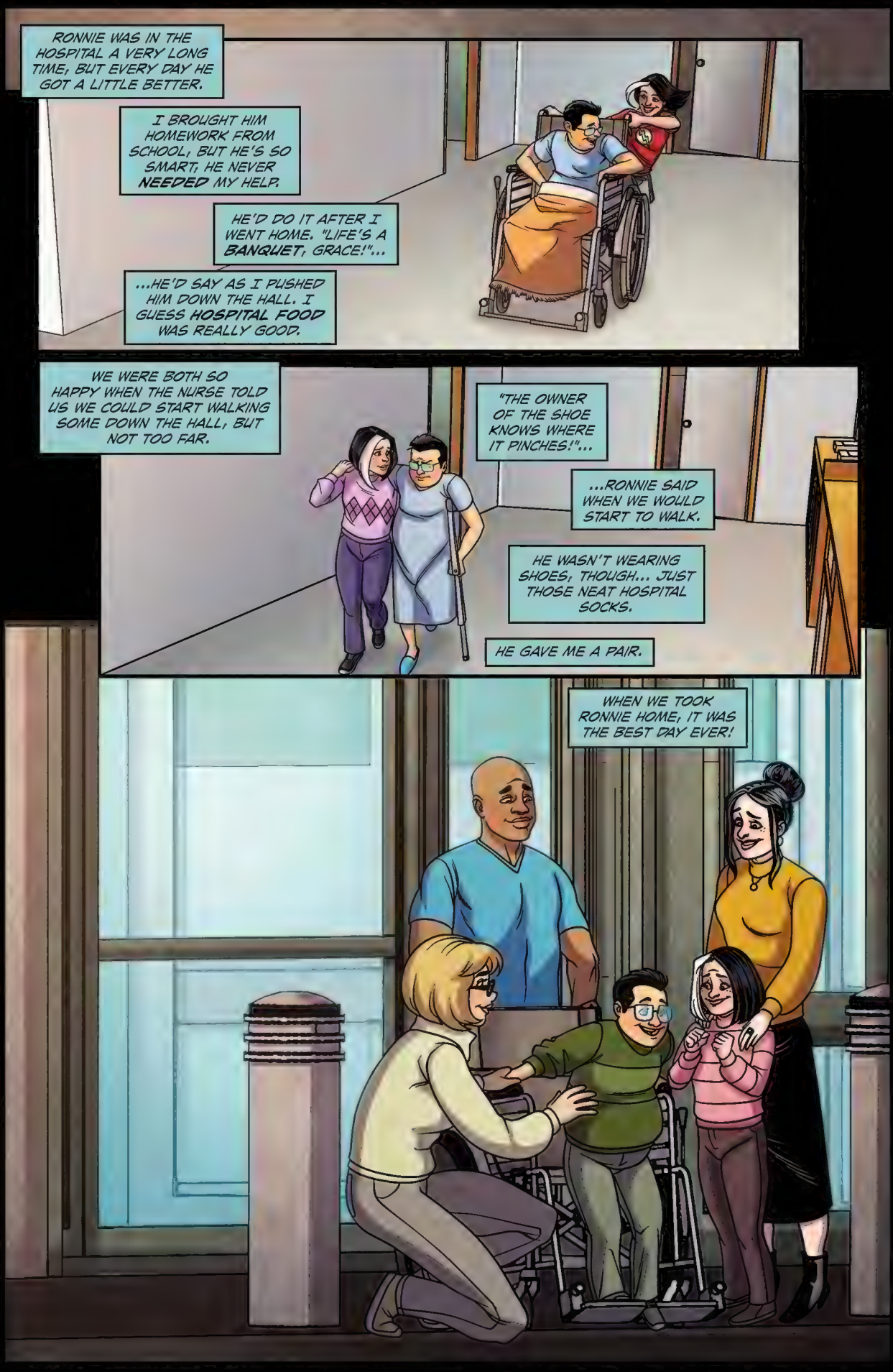
HA HA HA! YES, I THINK SO, TOO.
GRACE?
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
DORIAN KILLED ME!
NO, UNCLE EMMET.
HE KILLED WRATH.
DORIAN SAYS YOU PUSHED WRATH JUST FAR ENOUGH AWAY THAT HE COULD HURT HIM WITHOUT REALLY HURTING YOU.
THE BAR! WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE THERE, YOUR MOM, IS EVERYONE OKAY?
YES, MOMMY HELPED THEM AND TALKED TO THE NICE POLICE LADY. SHE HELPED US GET YOU HOME.
WHERE IS YOUR MOM? SHE LEFT YOU HERE ALONE?
HE HE. NO, UNCLE EMMET. SHE'S OUTSIDE. WE'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU SLEEP.

UNCLE WALLY'S HERE!
HI, BABE.
WALLY! HOW... NO... YOU CAN'T BE--
I'M NOT A GHOST.
I DON'T KNOW HOW IT WORKS... THE COMA, I GUESS... IT SET ME ADRIFT...
...BUT YOU CALLED TO ME, SO I CAME. SOMEHOW GRACE CAN SEE ME EVEN WHEN NOBODY ELSE COULD. SHE'S HELPING YOU SEE ME NOW.

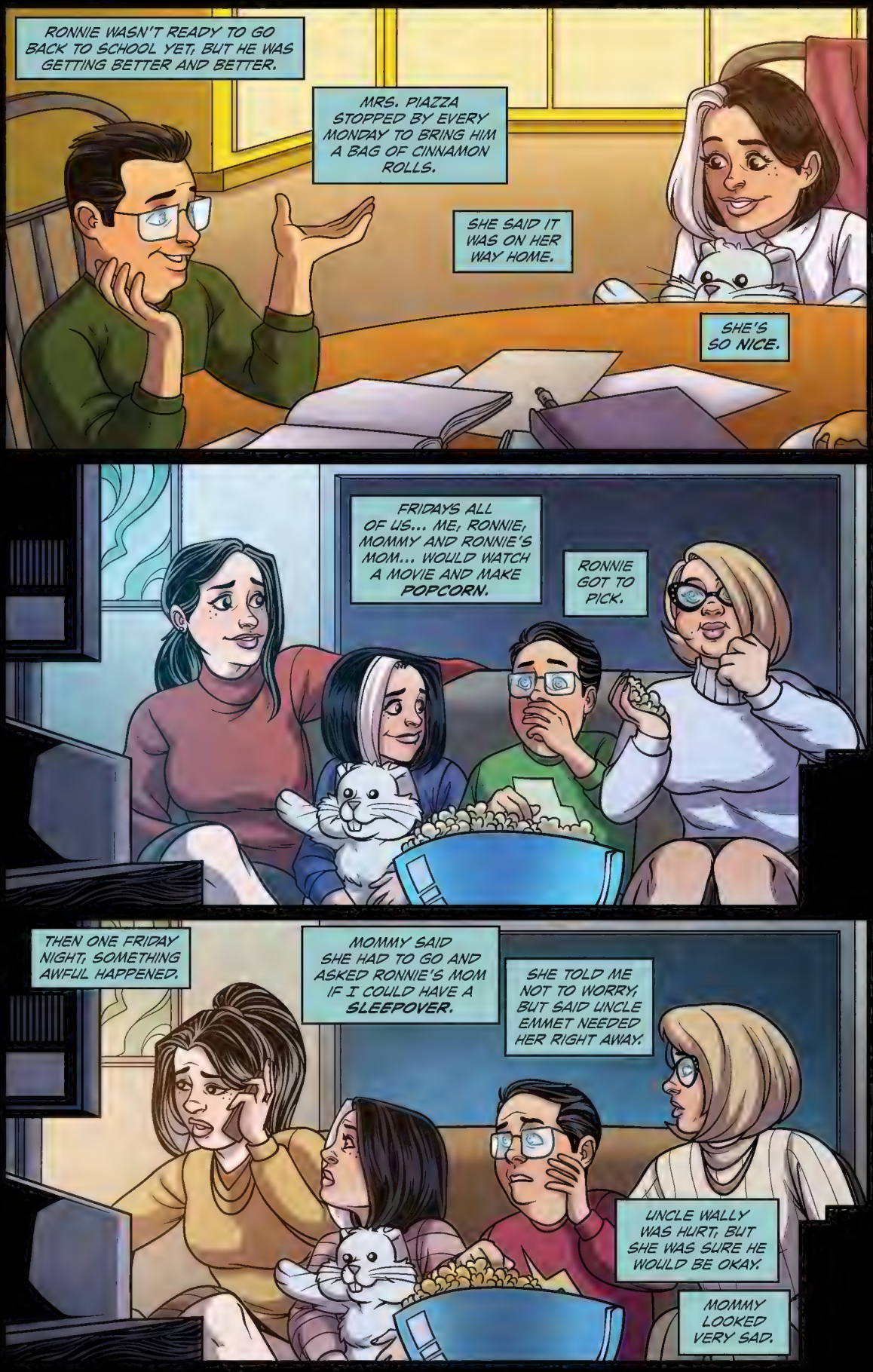
I... UHHN... UHH... HUH... I...
SHHHHH... EMMET... AFTER ALL THESE YEARS... I KNOW.
I KNOW.

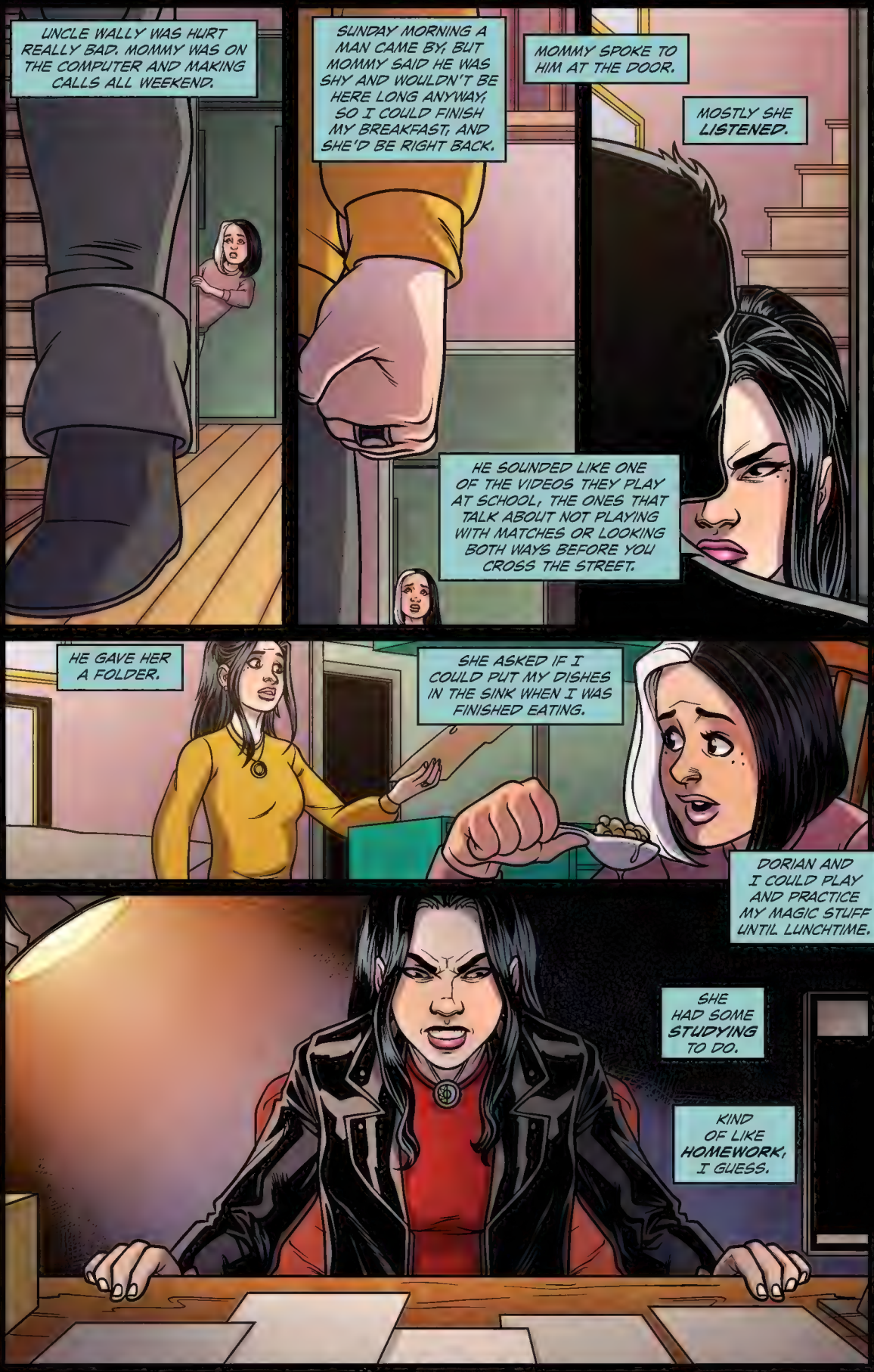
CHAPTER 5

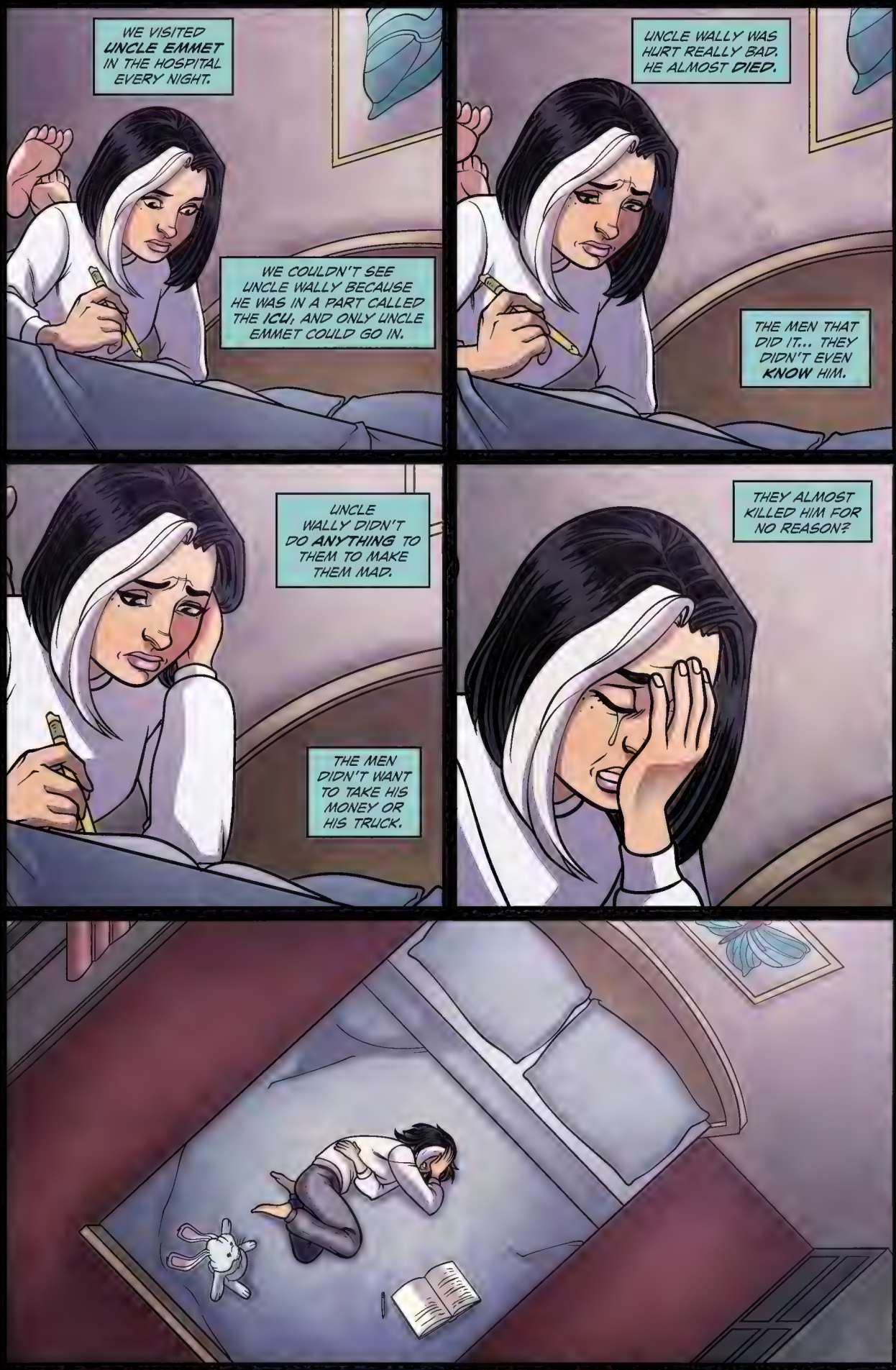

I DON'T WRITE IN MY JOURNAL ANYMORE.
GRACE
IT USED TO BE FUN. GOING TO THE ZOO, VISITING GRANDPA, GOING TO SCHOOL... ALL OF THAT USED TO BE FUN.
MOMMY TOLD ME TO WRITE DOWN ALL THE HAPPY TIMES IN HERE.
SHE SAID, "HAVE FUN, BE SILLY AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT OTHER PEOPLE MIGHT THINK.
"LIFE ISN'T ALWAYS PERFECT, BUT WE DO THE BEST WE CAN.
"THIS JOURNAL IS YOURS AND YOUR LIFE WILL BE THE ADVENTURE. WRITE, DRAW, COLOR... WHATEVER YOU WANT!"
THEN MOMMY LOOKED HAPPY AND SAD AT THE SAME TIME.
SHE SAID, "MAYBE WHEN YOU'RE ALL GROWN UP AND YOU HAVE A LITTLE GIRL OF YOUR OWN, SHE'LL READ IT.
"MAYBE WHEN I'M REALLY OLD, YOU'LL LET ME READ IT...
"BUT NO PRESSURE. THIS ISN'T HOMEWORK."
"GRACE, IF YOU'RE ANYTHING LIKE ME, SOMETIMES YOU'LL RUN HOME TO GET THIS BOOK AND WRITE DOWN ALL THE INCREDIBLE THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO YOU THAT DAY...
"BUT SOMETIMES...
"THE COVER TO THIS JOURNAL WILL SEEM SO HEAVY THAT YOU JUST CAN'T LIFT IT.
"THAT'S OKAY, TOO.
"YOU'LL KNOW WHEN YOU SHOULD OPEN IT AGAIN."


RONNIE WAS IN THE HOSPITAL A VERY LONG TIME, BUT EVERY DAY HE GOT A LITTLE BETTER.
I BROUGHT HIM HOMEWORK FROM SCHOOL, BUT HE'S SO SMART, HE NEVER NEEDED MY HELP.
HE'D DO IT AFTER I WENT HOME. "LIFE'S A BANQUET, GRACE!"...
...HE'D SAY AS I PUSHED HIM DOWN THE HALL. I GUESS HOSPITAL FOOD WAS REALLY GOOD.
WE WERE BOTH SO HAPPY WHEN THE NURSE TOLD US WE COULD START WALKING SOME DOWN THE HALL, BUT NOT TOO FAR.
"THE OWNER OF THE SHOE KNOWS WHERE IT PINCHES!"...
...RONNIE SAID WHEN WE WOULD START TO WALK.
HE WASN'T WEARING SHOES, THOUGH... JUST THOSE NEAT HOSPITAL SOCKS.
HE GAVE ME A PAIR.
WHEN WE TOOK RONNIE HOME, IT WAS THE BEST DAY EVER!

DORIAN'S BEEN TRAINING MOMMY, PRACTICING USING THE MAGIC RINGS.
IT'S DIFFERENT FOR HER, AND SHE DIDN'T LIKE IT AT FIRST.
IT DIDN'T TAKE TOO LONG BEFORE SHE WAS DOING MUCH BETTER.
SHE WAS HAVING FUN. MOMMY WOULD ASK DORIAN TO TRAIN WITH HER FOR HOURS IN THE MORNING AND MORE AT NIGHT.
MOMMY WAS SO AWESOME!
DORIAN WOULD SWITCH FROM ANGEL MAGIC TO EARTH MAGIC BECAUSE HE SAID THEY WERE VERY DIFFERENT THINGS, BUT MOMMY WAS LEARNING HOW TO BEAT ALL OF IT.
SHE WAS SO HAPPY, AND DORIAN WAS PROUD OF HER.
I WAS, TOO.


RONNIE WASN'T READY TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL YET, BUT HE WAS GETTING BETTER AND BETTER.
MRS. PIAZZA STOPPED BY EVERY MONDAY TO BRING HIM A BAG OF CINNAMON ROLLS.
SHE SAID IT WAS ON HER WAY HOME.
SHE'S SO NICE.
FRIDAYS ALL OF US... ME, RONNIE, MOMMY AND RONNIE'S MOM... WOULD WATCH A MOVIE AND MAKE POPCORN.
RONNIE GOT TO PICK.
THEN ONE FRIDAY NIGHT, SOMETHING AWFUL HAPPENED.
MOMMY SAID SHE HAD TO GO AND ASKED RONNIE'S MOM IF I COULD HAVE A SLEEPOVER.
SHE TOLD ME NOT TO WORRY, BUT SAID UNCLE EMMET NEEDED HER RIGHT AWAY.
UNCLE WALLY WAS HURT, BUT SHE WAS SURE HE WOULD BE OKAY.
MOMMY LOOKED VERY SAD.


UNCLE WALLY WAS HURT REALLY BAD. MOMMY WAS ON THE COMPUTER AND MAKING CALLS ALL WEEKEND.
SUNDAY MORNING A MAN CAME BY, BUT MOMMY SAID HE WAS SHY AND WOULDN'T BE HERE LONG ANYWAY, SO I COULD FINISH MY BREAKFAST, AND SHE'D BE RIGHT BACK.
MOMMY SPOKE TO HIM AT THE DOOR.
MOSTLY SHE LISTENED.
HE SOUNDED LIKE ONE OF THE VIDEOS THEY PLAY AT SCHOOL, THE ONES THAT TALK ABOUT NOT PLAYING WITH MATCHES OR LOOKING BOTH WAYS BEFORE YOU CROSS THE STREET.
HE GAVE HER A FOLDER.
SHE ASKED IF I COULD PUT MY DISHES IN THE SINK WHEN I WAS FINISHED EATING.
DORIAN AND I COULD PLAY AND PRACTICE MY MAGIC STUFF UNTIL LUNCHTIME.
SHE HAD SOME STUDYING TO DO.
KIND OF LIKE HOMEWORK, I GUESS.

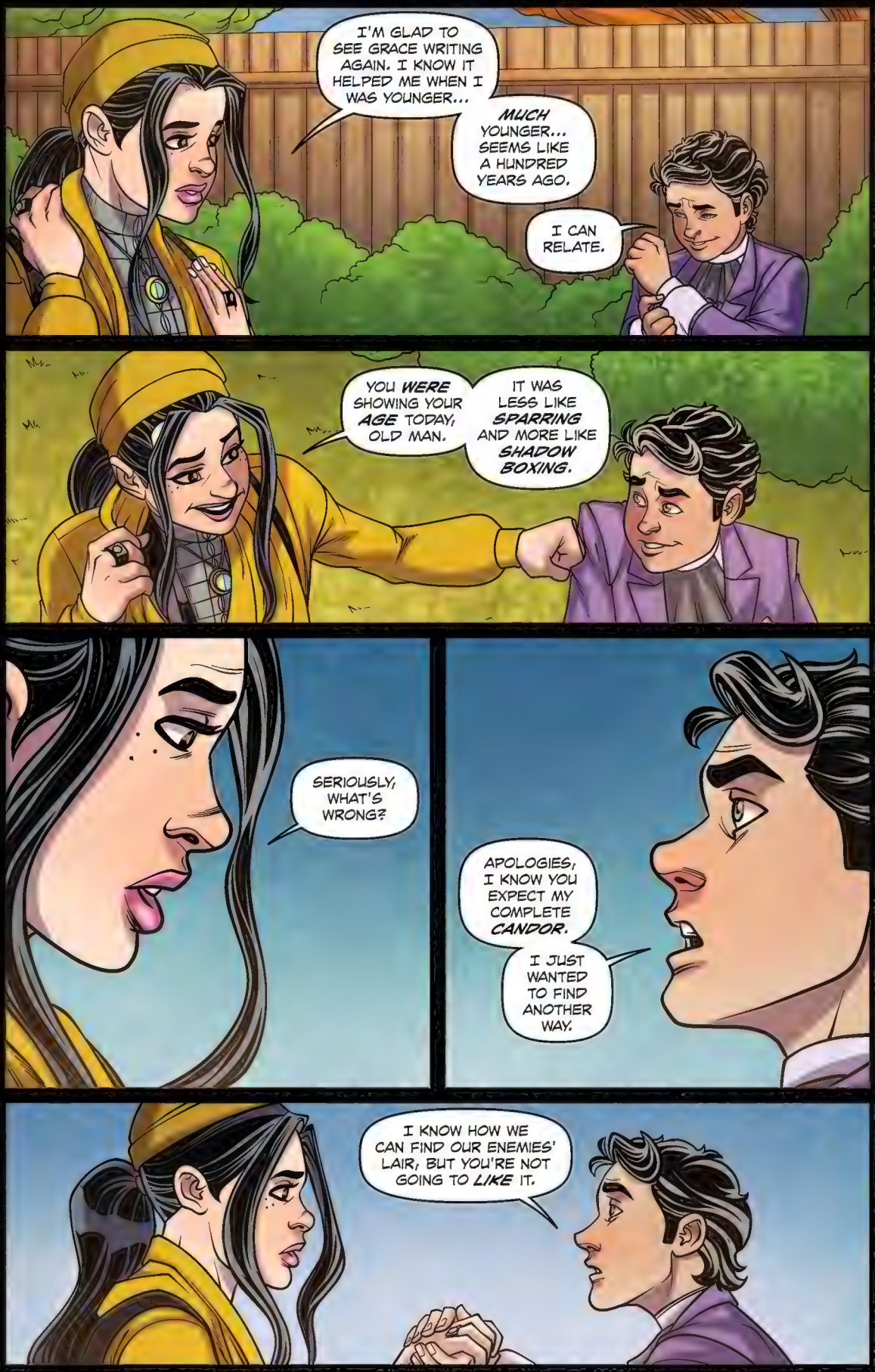

WE VISITED UNCLE EMMET IN THE HOSPITAL EVERY NIGHT.
WE COULDN'T SEE UNCLE WALLY BECAUSE HE WAS IN A PART CALLED THE ICU, AND ONLY UNCLE EMMET COULD GO IN.
UNCLE WALLY WAS HURT REALLY BAD. HE ALMOST DIED.
THE MEN THAT DID IT... THEY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HIM.
UNCLE WALLY DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO THEM TO MAKE THEM MAD.
THE MEN DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE HIS MONEY OR HIS TRUCK.
THEY ALMOST KILLED HIM FOR NO REASON?

ONE NIGHT MOMMY WANTED US TO WAIT IN THE CAR WHILE SHE TALKED TO UNCLE EMMET AT THE HOSPITAL.
THEN SHE CAME RUNNING BACK, AND I COULD TELL SHE WAS WORRIED.
UNCLE EMMET HAD LEFT WITHOUT HER, AND SHE HAD TO GET TO HIM FAST BECAUSE HE MIGHT BE IN TROUBLE AND IT WAS HER FAULT.
HE WAS GOING TO A BAR WHERE ONE OF THE MEN WHO HURT UNCLE WALLY WAS DRINKING.
UNCLE EMMET HAD FOUND THE BAD MAN, AND ALL THE SADNESS HE FELT BECAUSE OF UNCLE WALLY BEING HURT TURNED INTO HATE.
GLYPH HAD TRICKED HIM INTO BECOMING WRATH, AND THE FIRES WRATH MADE WERE BURNING UP EVERYTHING: THE BAR, UNCLE EMMET, AND ALMOST MOMMY, TOO.
MOMMY STOPPED HIM WITH ICE FROM HER RINGS, BUT BEFORE SHE COULD DO ANYTHING ELSE, DORIAN STABBED UNCLE EMMET!

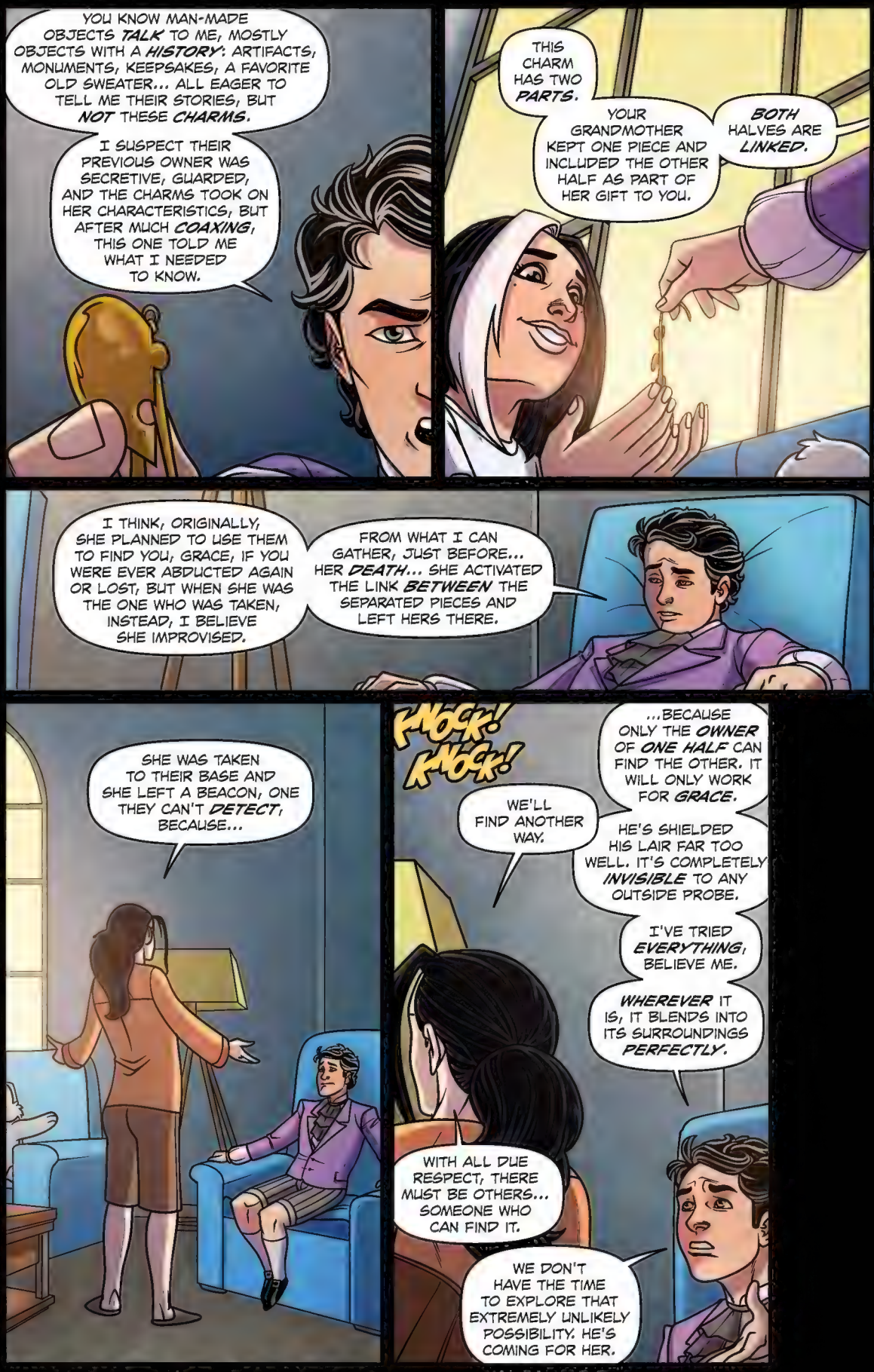
SHE TOLD ME THAT DORIAN'S SWORD DOESN'T HURT SOMEONE'S BODY.
IT CUTS INTO THE THING INSIDE CALLED A SOUL OR SPIRIT, BUT I THINK SHE MEANT GHOST.
WRATH WAS A GHOST, AND DORIAN WAS TRYING TO PULL IT AWAY FROM UNCLE EMMET, BUT WRATH WAS VERY STRONG.
THE OTHER BUNNY INSIDE STABBITY WANTED OUT, AND I WAS SURPRISED WHEN MOMMY SAID OKAY!
HE FOUGHT WRATH, AND IT WAS SCARY, BUT HE WON. THEN HE ATE WRATH UP!
THEN THE OTHER BUNNY WENT BACK INSIDE STABBITY AND WAS QUIET FOR A LONG TIME.

MOMMY WAS WORRIED ABOUT UNCLE EMMET. SHE CALLED FOR HELP.
SHE COULDN'T SEE UNCLE WALLY.
HE WASN'T A GHOST, NOT EXACTLY, BUT HE WAS THERE HELPING UNCLE EMMET.
HE KEPT TELLING UNCLE EMMET HE LOVED HIM AND SAID THEY'D ALWAYS BE TOGETHER NO MATTER WHAT.
THE BAD MAN TOLD THE POLICE HE WAS ONE OF THE MEN THAT HURT UNCLE WALLY.
HE SAID HE STARTED THE FIRE, TOO.
THE POLICE LADY WAS A FRIEND, AND SHE HELPED US TAKE UNCLE EMMET HOME.
HE SLEPT FOR A LONG TIME, BUT WE ALL WATCHED TO BE SURE HE WAS OKAY.

I HELPED UNCLE EMMET SO HE COULD SEE UNCLE WALLY.
HE WAS SO HAPPY.
THEY BOTH WERE, AND THEY TALKED FOR A LONG TIME BEFORE UNCLE WALLY SAID HE WAS TIRED AND HAD TO GO BACK SOON.
HE TOLD UNCLE EMMET THAT HE COULD HEAR HIM AT THE HOSPITAL EVEN THOUGH IT LOOKED LIKE HE WAS ASLEEP.
HE PROMISED HE WOULD DO HIS BEST TO WAKE UP SOON.
ABOUT A WEEK LATER, HE DID IT! THEN IT TOOK A LONG TIME, BUT ONE DAY THE DOCTORS SAID HE COULD GO HOME!
THEY WERE TOGETHER AGAIN, JUST LIKE UNCLE WALLY PROMISED.


I'M GLAD TO SEE GRACE WRITING AGAIN. I KNOW IT HELPED ME WHEN I WAS YOUNGER...
MUCH YOUNGER... SEEMS LIKE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.
I CAN RELATE.
YOU *WERE* SHOWING YOUR *AGE* TODAY, OLD MAN.
IT WAS LESS LIKE *SPARRING* AND MORE LIKE *SHADOW BOXING.*
SERIOUSLY, WHAT'S WRONG?
APOLOGIES, I KNOW YOU EXPECT MY COMPLETE *CANDOR.*
I JUST WANTED TO FIND ANOTHER WAY.
I KNOW HOW WE CAN FIND OUR ENEMIES' LAIR, BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO *LIKE* IT.

I HAVE TO SAY I'M PROUD OF YOU BOTH.
FROM MY CONVERSATIONS WITH EZRA, I KNEW YOU HAD TO BE EXTRAORDINARY, BUT YOU'VE COME SO FAR IN SUCH A SHORT TIME.
AMANDA, I'VE NEVER MET A BRAVER, MORE CAPABLE WARRIOR.
GRACE, YOU ARE A FORCE OF NATURE. HEH, OF COURSE, BUT ALSO SUCH A SWEET, YOUNG LADY.
NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE STRENGTH TO BE FOUND IN KINDNESS--
YOU KNOW YOU CAN JUST TALK TO US, RIGHT? WE'RE FAMILY NOW.
DON'T BE NERVOUS, DOOR.
SORRY. I TEND TO RAMBLE WHEN I'M ANXIOUS.
I SHOULD JUST GO STRAIGHT TO THE POINT, ESPECIALLY... WELL...
IT'S JUST, I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR WEEKS, AND I'VE STRUGGLED WITH MYSELF.
IS IT RIGHT FOR ME TO WITHHOLD INFORMATION? EVEN IF I MEAN WELL--
DORIAN.
WE CAN FIND OUR ENEMIES, BUT GRACE HAS TO ACCOMPANY US.
SHE STAYS HERE.
I KNOW THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, AND I'VE TRIED TO FIND ANOTHER WAY, BUT WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? I LOVE YOU, DORIAN, BUT YOU BETTER TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW. NOW.
START WITH THE BRACELET.


YOU KNOW MAN-MADE OBJECTS *TALK* TO ME, MOSTLY OBJECTS WITH A *HISTORY*: ARTIFACTS, MONUMENTS, KEEPSAKES, A FAVORITE OLD SWEATER... ALL EAGER TO TELL ME THEIR STORIES, BUT *NOT* THESE *CHARMS*.
I SUSPECT THEIR PREVIOUS OWNER WAS SECRETIVE, GUARDED, AND THE CHARMS TOOK ON HER CHARACTERISTICS, BUT AFTER MUCH *COAXING*, THIS ONE TOLD ME WHAT I NEEDED TO KNOW.
THIS CHARM HAS TWO *PARTS*.
YOUR GRANDMOTHER KEPT ONE PIECE AND INCLUDED THE OTHER HALF AS PART OF HER GIFT TO YOU.
BOTH HALVES ARE *LINKED*.
I THINK, ORIGINALLY, SHE PLANNED TO USE THEM TO FIND YOU, GRACE, IF YOU WERE EVER ABDUCTED AGAIN OR LOST, BUT WHEN SHE WAS THE ONE WHO WAS TAKEN, INSTEAD, I BELIEVE SHE IMPROVISED.
FROM WHAT I CAN GATHER, JUST BEFORE... HER *DEATH*... SHE ACTIVATED THE LINK *BETWEEN* THE SEPARATED PIECES AND LEFT HERS THERE.
SHE WAS TAKEN TO THEIR BASE AND SHE LEFT A BEACON, ONE THEY CAN'T *DETECT*, BECAUSE...
KNOCK! KNOCK!
...BECAUSE ONLY THE *OWNER* OF *ONE HALF* CAN FIND THE OTHER. IT WILL ONLY WORK FOR *GRACE*.
WE'LL FIND ANOTHER WAY.
HE'S SHIELDED HIS LAIR FAR TOO WELL. IT'S COMPLETELY *INVISIBLE* TO ANY OUTSIDE PROBE.
I'VE TRIED *EVERYTHING*, BELIEVE ME.
WHEREVER IT IS, IT BLENDS INTO ITS SURROUNDINGS *PERFECTLY*.
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, THERE MUST BE OTHERS... SOMEONE WHO CAN FIND IT.
WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO EXPLORE THAT EXTREMELY UNLIKELY POSSIBILITY. HE'S COMING FOR HER.

RONNIE?
RONNIE! DID YOU WALK OVER HERE?!
THOUGHT YOU WEREN'T HOME, HA HA!
IT'S SO GREAT! YOU'RE ALL BETTER? ARE YOU COMING BACK TO SCHOOL?
THE DOCTOR SAYS I'M READY! MONDAY, IF YOUR MOM CAN PICK ME UP?
SURE! I MEAN, I'LL ASK HER, BUT...
AWESOME! WANT TO READ SOME COMICS?
MY MOM BOUGHT ME A GRAPHIC NOVEL!
IT'S GOT REALLY OLD ONES, LIKE FROM THE '90s!
I CAN'T RIGHT NOW. WE'RE... SORTA...
OHHH... MAGIC STUFF AGAIN?
YEAH, MOMMY DOESN'T LIKE ME TO TALK ABOUT THAT OUT HERE.
IT'S OKAY. MY MOM IS PROBABLY WORRYING ABOUT ME ANYWAY.... BUT IT'S NOTHING BAD?
NO, IT'S NOT BAD. I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T--
I KNOW... ONLY FAMILY... JUST BE CAREFUL, GRACE.
WE MIGHT KNOW WHERE THEY ARE, WHERE THEY HIDE, THAT'S ALL.
GRACE... THAT'S HUGE.

SEVERAL MINUTES OF CONVERSATION LATER...
WELL, YOUR MOM'S RIGHT! YOU SHOULDN'T GO.
DORIAN SAYS THEY NEED ME...
DORIAN?! HE'S SOME KIND OF ANGEL WHO CAN'T BE HURT, RIGHT? HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND.
YOUR MOM IS REALLY TOUGH AND REALLY, REALLY SMART. THEY CAN DO THIS WITHOUT YOU.
BUT I CAN HELP! I'VE BEEN WORKING ON MY MAG--
OUR MOMS ARE SO ALIKE. MY MOM WAS WORRIED ABOUT ME JUST WALKING OVER HERE ALONE.
IF ANYTHING GOES ON, ANY DANGER OR A FIGHT, THE ONLY THING YOUR MOM WILL BE THINKING ABOUT IS PROTECTING YOU.
SHE MIGHT GET HURT BECAUSE YOU'RE THERE.
MAYBE YOU CAN LEAD THEM THERE, AND STABBITY COULD GET YOU OUT? CAN HE TELEPORT YOU AWAY?
JUST AS LONG AS YOU'RE NOT THERE. IT'S PROBABLY GOING TO BE MORE OF A SPY MISSION ANYWAY.
I'LL ASK STABBITY, MAYBE HE CAN DO THAT?
PROMISE ME, GRACE.
OKAY... I'LL ASK... PROMISE.

AFTER A PRIVATE CHAT WITH HER BUNNY...
STABBITY SAYS HE CAN DO IT. HE CAN BRING ME BACK HOME, IF THAT'S WHAT WE REALLY WANT.
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WANT.
WAS THAT A WARNING, GRACE? "IF THAT'S WHAT WE REALLY WANT"... DID HE ELABORATE?
IT DOESN'T MATTER. SHE'S NOT GOING OTHERWISE.
HE SAID YOU'LL NEED US, ESPECIALLY HIM, AND IF HE BRINGS ME BACK HOME, HE CAN'T GO BACK TO HELP YOU. I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN CALL HIM.
WE'LL BE FINE.
IT SOUNDS LIKE HE HAS INSIGHTS OR MAYBE PREMONITIONS TO THE CONTRARY--
I'M DOING THIS TO SAVE MY DAUGHTER... TO FREE HER FROM OUR FAMILY CURSE.
BUT, IN ORDER TO DO THAT WE HAVE TO BE VICTORIOUS, AND--
GRACE'S SAFETY IS ALL THAT MATTERS HERE. NO OFFENSE, DORIAN, BUT THIS IS TOO IMPORTANT.
I AGREE, AND THAT'S WHY WE CAN'T AFFORD TO--
YOU'RE IMMORTAL, RIGHT?
YES... BUT YOU--
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. I HAD A GOOD TEACHER, DIDN'T I? LET'S JUST WIN.

LATER THAT NIGHT...
...SO WE WILL NEED YOU, GRACE, TO LEAD US DIRECTLY TO THE LAIR.
THE FIRST LOCATION IS JUST A STARTING POINT.
IT'S LIKELY THERE WILL BE MULTIPLE PORTALS OR PASSAGES, AND UNTIL WE REACH OUR ULTIMATE DESTINATION, YOUR GUIDANCE WILL BE ESSENTIAL.
YOU'LL KNOW WHEN WE'RE CLOSE.
AND THEN...
...STABBITY BLINKS ME HOME.
ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY, HONEY? I KNOW THIS PLACE IS WHERE YOU--
YES, MOMMY, I'M OKAY...
THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.
WE'RE STRONGER NOW.

AROUND TO THE BACK OF LARRY'S HIDEAWAY...
I DON'T DETECT ANY MYSTICAL TRAPS OR WARDS... BUT LET'S PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY.
WELL, FROM THE FRONT WE CAN SEE THIS SHACK IS DESERTED.
THAT'S NOT WHERE THIS DOOR LEADS.
CLCKT!
THIS IS GRACE'S SCHOOL?
IT'S ONLY THROUGH THE POWER OF THE CHARM THAT WE CAN ACCESS THESE DOORWAYS IN THE SAME WAY AS OUR ENEMIES.
WHOAAAAAH.
SEVERAL DOORWAYS LATER...
THIS IS THE REALM BETWEEN EARTH, AND... IT'S NOT POSSIBLE.
WHERE'S THE NEXT DOOR?
I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE, WHEN GLYPH WAS HURTING UNCLE EZRA!
THIS WAY!
BUT IT JUST LEADS BACK TO THE...

...SCHOOL?
THIS IS IT.
OKAY, GRACE... GET OUT OF HERE.
HE'S TRYING, MOMMY, BUT HE CAN'T!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN HE CAN'T?
AMANDA!
RUN!
MOMMMYY!
OH, GRACE...

...I TOLD YOU NOT TO COME.

CHAPTER 6

GET AWAY FROM HIM! RONNIE, THIS CAN'T BE--
PLEASE, LET ME EXPLAIN. I WANTED TO TELL YOU BEFORE, BUT I COULDN'T.
SON, I TOLD YOU THIS WOULD NOT GO WELL. SHE'S TOO UPSET TO LISTEN.
HE'S DONE SOMETHING TO YOU! RUN!
THAT'S ENOUGH!
DON'T! NOT HER! YOU PROMISED!
NO! RONNIE! RUN!
I'M SORRY, GRACE...
WE CAN FIX THIS. WE CAN FIX EVERYTHING.
YOU'LL SEE.

MMMMM, DELICIOUS!
AT FIRST, WHEN RONNIE TOLD ME WE WERE GOING TO HAVE SURPRISE GUESTS, I WAS LESS THAN PLEASED.
AFTER ALL MY PLANNING, YOU WERE GOING TO RUIN EVERYTHING, BUT THEN I REALIZED IT WAS ACTUALLY FITTING.
MY INTERACTIONS WITH YOUR FAMILY HAVE BEEN STEEPED IN THE UNEXPECTED FOR THE LAST AGGRAVATING CENTURY... WHY SHOULD THE ENDING BE ANY DIFFERENT?
SO, HERE WE ARE AT LAST. I KNOW THERE HAVE BEEN SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS ALONG THE WAY, BUT I'M HOPEFUL.
I WANTED AN ALLIANCE WITH YOUR FAMILY, BUT YOUR GREAT, GREAT... GREAT? ANYWAY, YOUR ANCESTOR ROBBED AND KILLED ME!
ALL OF THAT IS IN THE PAST. JUST LOOK AT HOW WELL OUR CHILDREN GET ALONG!
DEAR, IF WE'RE GOING TO TALK, IT'S A LITTLE RUDE TO FEIGN UNCONSCIOUSNESS, HMMM?
WHERE'S DORIAN?
NOW THAT YOU'RE OFFICIALLY AWAKE, WE SHOULD BE TALKING ABOUT US.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT YOUR HALF-ANGEL FRIEND. DORIAN'S FINE, HE'S BEING ENTERTAINED ELSEWHERE.

THIS IS DELIGHTFUL. REALLY.
WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?
PLEASE, DON'T RUIN THE MOMENT. LET ME SAVOR THIS...
WHERE ARE THEY?
ZERO BARS... NO WIFI... THIS PLACE SUCKS.
I HAVE BEEN ASSURED THEY ARE PERFECTLY SAFE, AT LEAST FOR NOW.
SO ... DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM. THIS IS OUR TIME.
LET ME GO. THIS WON'T HOLD ME FOR LONG.
CAN I JUST STOP HIS HEART OR SOMETHING? I WANT TO GET HOME.
SADLY, THAT'S NOT AN OPTION. HE'S TOO... IMMORTAL FOR THAT...
HE CAN STILL BE USEFUL TO US, THOUGH.
I'D NEVER HELP YOU AGAIN.
OH, YOU WILL. YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO STOP YOURSELF.

DAMN YOU! RELEASE ME!

I BLAME MY INCOMPETENT SERVANTS FOR THIS TERRIBLE MESS.
LOOK HOW WELL WE'RE GETTING ALONG.
YES...
WHAT DO YOU THINK, GRACE?
HE'S NOT REAL.
I ASSURE YOU--
HE'S NOT REALLY HERE.
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS, CHILD!
STABBITY!
HA! THAT WON'T WORK HERE.
STABBITY!
STOP IT! YOU CAN'T--
AHHHHHHHH!

HE WAS A TRICK THIS TIME, BUT WHEN I SAW HIM IN THE TUNNELS WITH RONNIE, HE WAS REAL--
MOMMY! LOOK AT THE CHARMS!
RONNIE'S HERE?!
LOOK! HERE ON THE FLOOR... WHAT'S THAT...
NANA?
AAAHH!
KLK
WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU OKAY?!
YES, MOMMY... SHE WAS... THE HEART...
IT WAS... IT FELT LIKE SHE WAS HERE, JUST FOR A SECOND.
WHO, GRACE?
NANA...

YOU SAID RONNIE'S HERE?! IS HE OKAY? HOW DO WE FIND HIM?
HE'S OKAY. HE WAS... HE WAS HELPING THAT MAN...
THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT, HONEY. HE'S YOUR FRIEND. TRISH, SHE'S MY BEST... THEY...
WHAT? MOMMY WHAT?!
I THINK WE WERE SET UP.
IN MY OLD JOB, SOMETIMES I HAD TO PRETEND I WAS SOMEONE ELSE.
IT WAS A WAY OF GETTING CLOSE TO PEOPLE, GETTING THEM TO TRUST YOU.
RONNIE AND HIS MOM WERE TOO PERFECT. THEY MOVED INTO TOWN RIGHT AFTER YOUR DAD LEFT...
BUT MAYBE I'M WRONG... I HOPE I AM.
NO! NO! RONNIE REALLY LIKES ME.
THAT MAN HAS DONE SOMETHING TO HIM. RONNIE'S NOT A LIAR!
HE CAN'T BE. SOMETHING'S WRONG... THIS IS ALL WRONG...
HONEY, I'M SO SORRY. I KNOW THIS IS HARD...
...BUT WE HAVE TO FIND DORIAN RIGHT AWAY. HE COULD BE IN TROUBLE.
I'LL SEE IF STABBITY CAN FI--

WHA--
FLASH!
SKKRACK!
ZZRAKT!

HONEY, YOU TWO GET OUT OF HERE!
STABBITY SAYS HE CAN'T!
THANK YOU.
BUT HE JUST TELEPORTED ALL THREE OF US HERE!
OKAY THEN, RUN TO THE BACK OF THE CAVERN, BEHIND THOSE ROCKS.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THEM.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? SHOULDN'T WE GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO--
TO WHAT? KILL US? HURT MY DAUGHTER? NO.
WE NEED TO TAKE THEM OUT. UNCONSCIOUS, THEY'RE JUST HUMAN, RIGHT?
YES, THEY'RE HUMAN, AND THEY DESERVE A CHANCE TO REDEEM THEMSELVES.
MAYBE, MAYBE SHE DOES... BUT HE'S HAD ENOUGH CHANCES.

THIS IS AN EXECUTION! DON'T DO IT, AMANDA!
HE'S A THREAT TO MY FAMILY'S SAFETY.
HE CAN HELP US GET OUT OF HERE! YOU WANT TO REGROUP. FOR THAT, WE NEED TO ESCAPE.
...OKAY.
I'LL BIND GLYPH AND THE GIRL...
...BEFORE WE REVIVE THEM.
DO IT.
NO, IT'S OKAY.
MOMMY WANTS US TO STAY HERE.
NO! YOU PROMISED THAT YOU'D WAIT!

AHHH!
SHRICK!
GRRAARRH!

A FEW SECONDS EARLIER
THERE, THAT'S BETTER.
GET STARTED. WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE.
GLYPH, WILL YOU HELP US?
AHHH!
GRACE!
HSSS!
NO! WAIT!

KRRRM!
KRRR!
UUHR!
AAH!

ARRRRRRH!
AAAIIIIEEEEE!
YESSS!
HRRRRRRUUHH!
GRACE, GET BACK!

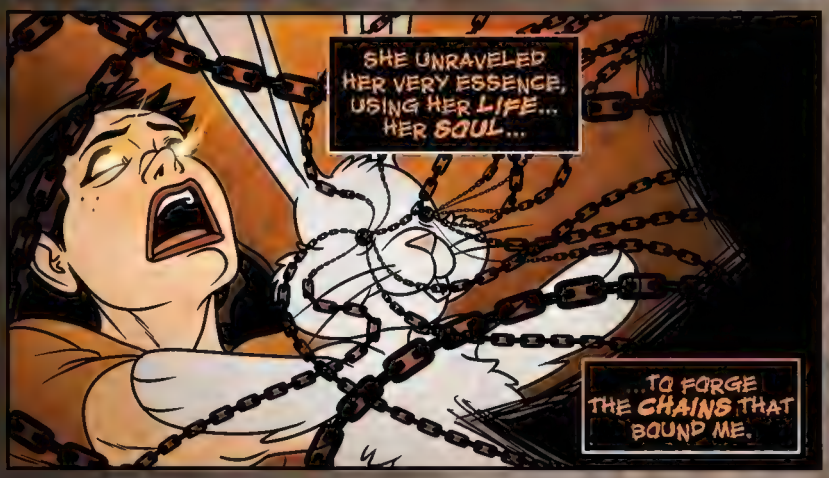
MOMMY, IT'S OKAY.
STABBITY, SHOULDN'T YOU GO BACK INSIDE THE BUNNY?
IT'S FREE NOW. WHY WOULD IT DO THAT?
STAY AWAY FROM HER!
IT'S SUFFERED IN THAT RIDICULOUS PRISON FOR ALMOST A CENTURY.
I'VE FREED IT. THE ORIGINAL CONTRACT STILL APPLIES... THE DEMON IS MINE.
IF HE'S FREE, HE CAN GO ANYWHERE.
IT IS FREE FROM THE *TALISMAN*. I AM ITS MASTER ONCE AGAIN.
NOT IF YOU'RE *DEAD*.
HE'S NOT WHAT YOU *THINK*! *YOU'RE* NOT THE BOSS OF *HIM*!
IT STANDS AWAITING MY ORDERS. IT'S STARTING TO REMEMBER... AREN'T YOU, DEMON?

I REMEMBERRR...

I REMEMBER EVERYTHING.
TRICKED BY CRUEL LITTLE BEINGS...

...VILE CREATURES, FORCING ME INTO SERVICE, ABUSING MY STRENGTH...
...SLAVE TO THEIR PETTY WHIMS.

UNTIL HER. SHE DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING...
...EXCEPT TO SAVE HER DAUGHTER.


SHE UNRAVELED HER VERY ESSENCE, USING HER LIFE... HER SOUL...
...TO FORGE THE CHAINS THAT BOUND ME.

I SLEPT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY EXISTENCE.
IN MY DREAMS, I LISTENED TO HER CHILD'S WHISPERED PRAYERS.
I REMEMBER. SHE HAD A SON. HE WAS WARM AND GENTLE...
THROUGH THE CHAINS I KNEW PEACE.
ONCE, HIS DAUGHTER WAS LOST, I COULD FEEL HER DISTRESS, BUT...
SHE FOUND COMFORT... IN ME... AND I KNEW BELONGING.
THE NEXT LITTLE GIRL HAD ALMOST NO TIME FOR CHILDHOOD, BUT SHE GAVE ME TO GRACE.
I KNEW SHE WOULD BE THE ONE.
SHE SPOKE TO ME, AND I BEGAN TO STIR.
SHE COULD SEE ME, AND SHE WASN'T SCARED.

YES... WELL, I'M SORRY I ASKED. TIME TO--
I CHOOSE THE CHILD, AND I WILL REMAIN WITH HER!
=UHHN= YOU... DON'T... GET TO CHOOSE. YOU'RE =UHHN= MINE!
K-TANG!
YOUR POWER IS MINE!
CHOOOT!
RRRARRGHH!

HAHAHAHA!
GRRRAAAAAA!
STOP IT! YOU'RE KILLING HIM!

I AM NEARLY COMPLETE...
JUST ONE MORE THING.
I'M SORRY, RONNIE. I KNOW IT'S GETTING A LITTLE CROWDED IN HERE, BUT YOU'RE A STRONG BOY.
SHUSH NOW... TRUST ME A LITTLE LONGER. IT'S ALMOST OVER.
WE JUST NEED TO SAY GOODBYE TO OUR GUESTS.

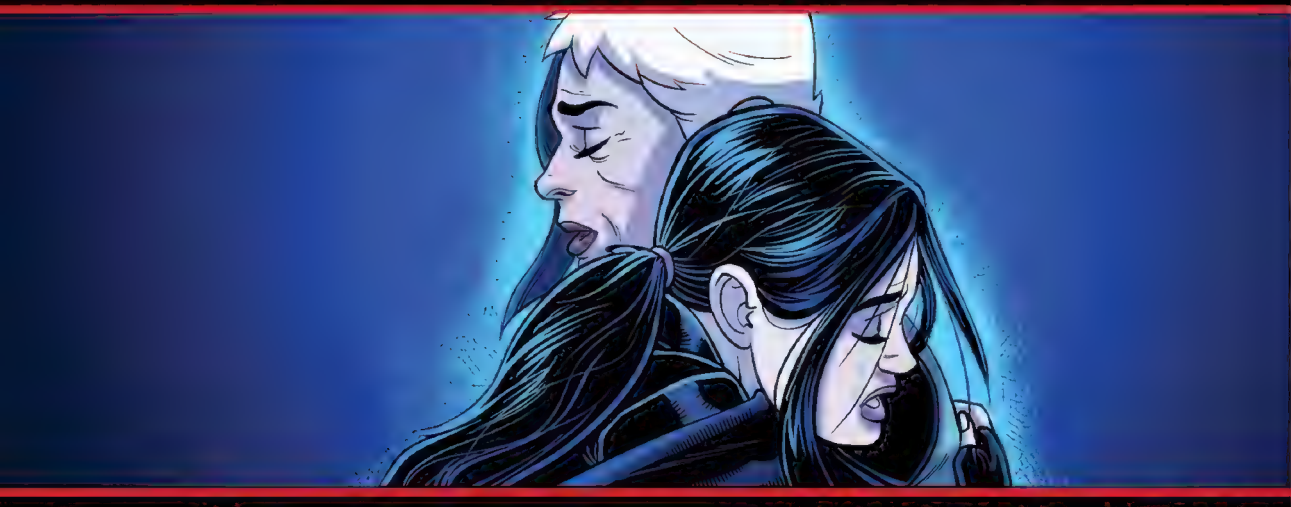
DON'T BE UPSET, SON, REMEMBER MY PROMISE.
LADIES...
LET HIM GO!
WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?
...GOODBYE.
SKRAK!

EH?
IT'S OVER, TALISMAN. THE POWER IS MINE NOW, NOT YOURS. YOU CAN'T PROTECT THEM ANY LONGER.
NO! HANZI!
FWOOM!
KRRK!
THWOOM!
FWOOSH!

HRRRN!
BOOM!!

FWOOSH!

CHAPTER 7



NO...NO...
HUH-HANZI...

SHHHH, CHILD. IT'S ALMOST OVER.
ONCE MOMMY IS DEAD, I'LL GIVE YOU ONE LAST CHANCE, GRACE.
MY RONNIE IS VERY FOND OF Y--
ARRGH! RONNIE, STOP THIS! REMEMBER... EVERYTHING...CAN BE FIXED. SHE'LL LISTEN TO US.
YOU'LL... BE THE HERO!
GRACE, RUN! FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE!
HE KILLED NANA AND STABBITY.
HE WON'T STOP.
I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE...BUT... I'M SORRY, RONNIE...

...SO SORRY. I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU...
...I KNOW IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
NO! THE BARRIERS... THE ELEMENTALS CAN'T BE HERE! I LOCKED THEM OUT! UNLESS...
...UNLESS THE MAGE WHO CAST THE GLYPHS DECIDED TO TAKE THEM DOWN.
NOW, CHILD, QUICKLY! ASK AERO TO INTRODUCE YOU TO THEIR FRIEND, ERDE!
GRACE, YOU CAN TRUST HIM... FOR NOW.
OKAY, DORIAN, IF YOU SAY SO.
FIRST YOU, THEN YOUR MOM-MEEE, THEN THE TRAITORS--YOU'RE ALL DEAD!
MISS ARROW, CAN ERDE HELP US?
POSSIBLY, IT BENDS A FEW RULES, BUT ERDE DOES HATE BEING LOCKED OUT...

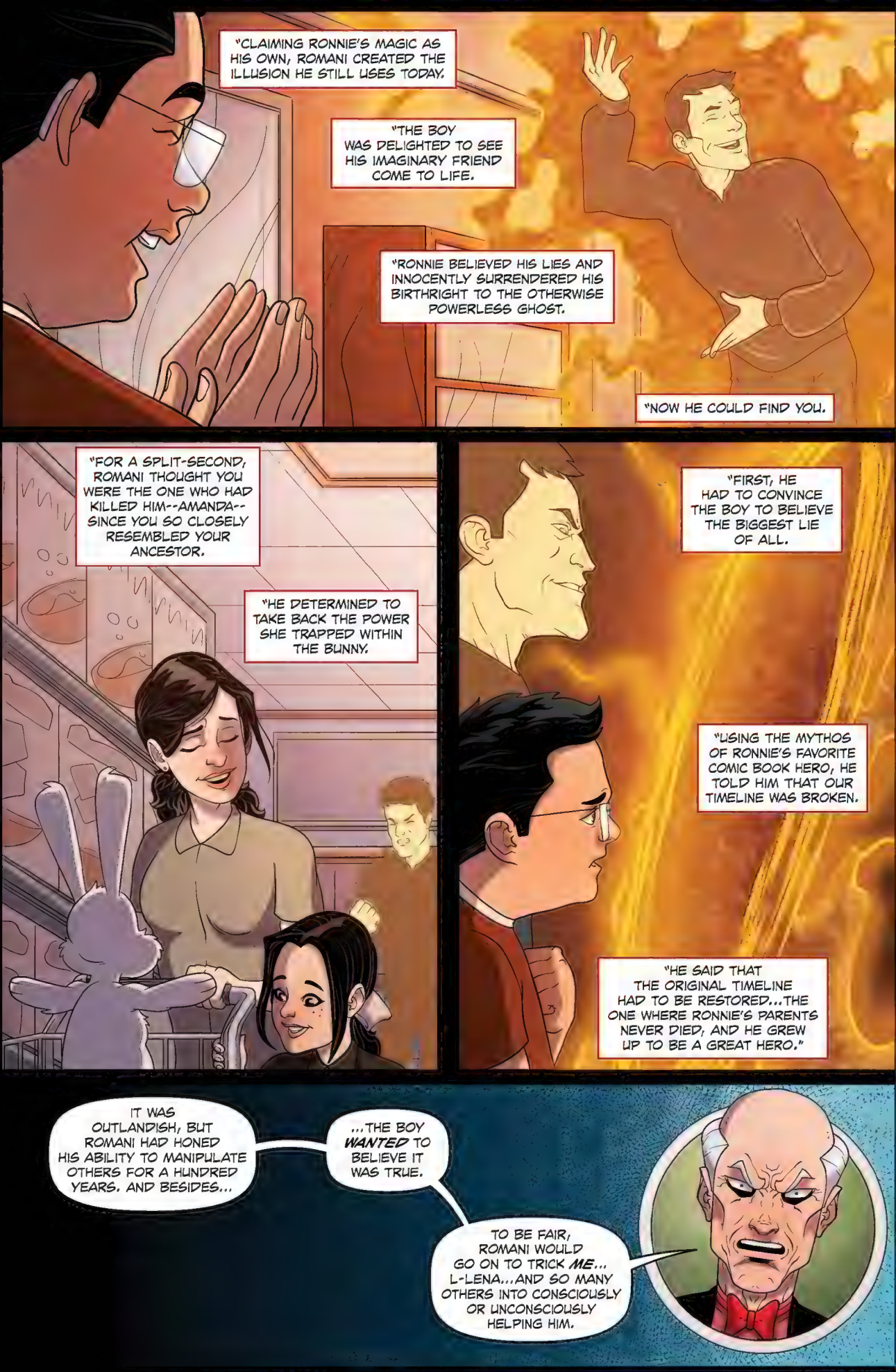
IT'S FORBIDDEN! YOU CAN'T INTERFERE!
RRUMMBLE HOW DARE YOU! RRRUMBLE
GIVE ME THAT!
THERE'S NO BARS, DUMMY.
DORIAN! GATHER YOUR FLOCK!
NOW!
AMANDA! GET GRACE! WE HAVE TO LEAVE!
I DON'T TRUST THAT... MAN, BUT...
...GRACE, COME HERE, CLOSE TO MOMMA.
THIS WON'T STOP ME! I'LL KILL YOU ALL! I'LL--

EVERYONE, GET CLOSER! THIS IS YOUR ONLY CHANCE!
RRUMMBLE
NO! RONNIE! HE'S STILL IN THERE!
BABY, WE CAN'T SAVE HIM!
RRUMMBLE
NOOO! IT'S NOT HIS FAULT!
RRUMMBLE
KA-THOOM!

SEVERAL TENSE MINUTES AFTER THE ESCAPE.
I'M SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE THAT YOU'RE HELPING US NOW?
WELL, I AM THE REASON YOU'RE STILL BREATHING--
YOU'RE ALSO THE REASON MY UNCLE IS DEAD. DORIAN TOLD US.
--NOT ALL OF THAT WAS MY FAULT!
WHY WAS THE GOTH GIRL CRYING LIKE THAT? WHAT WAS SHE YELLING ABOUT?
AND WHY DOES IT SMELL SO BAD IN HERE? AND ANOTHER THING--ARE YOU TALKING TO THAT CHAIR?
YES, THAT POOR CHAIR HAS BEEN THROUGH A LOT.
SLOTH WAS DEVASTATED BY THE LOSS OF HER PHONE.
APPARENTLY, SHE IS MORE UPSET ABOUT THE PHONE'S FATE THAN HER MOTHER'S RECENT DEATH.
SO, YOU WERE "POSSESSED"? THAT'S YOUR EXCUSE FOR ALL--
WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS!
HE'S STILL COMING FOR US... FOR HER...AND SOON!
WE MAY ONLY HAVE A FEW HOURS TO PREPARE.

N THE MINUTES THAT FOLLOWED, THE TRUTH FINALLY CAME TO LIGHT...
HE NEVER TOLD ME HIS REAL NAME, BUT LET'S CALL HIM ROMANI.
HE HAD DIED AT THE HANDS OF ONE OF YOUR ANCESTORS.
AS A DISEMBODIED SPIRIT, HE LACKED THE POWER TO EXACT HIS REVENGE PERSONALLY.
HE INFLUENCED OTHERS TO ATTACK YOUR FAMILY; BUT YOU WERE GOOD AT HIDING AND EVEN BETTER AT DEFENDING YOURSELVES.
"HIS OCCASIONAL VICTORIES ALWAYS FELL FRUSTRATINGLY SHORT OF HIS ONE TRUE GOAL, TO KILL ALL OF YOU, TO ELIMINATE YOUR FAMILY LINE.
"BUT THEN HE FOUND THE KEY TO EVERYTHING...

"...THE BOY, THE LAST OF ROMANI'S BLOODLINE, WAS RECENTLY ADOPTED BY A LOVING COUPLE AFTER HIS PARENTS HAD DIED...IN A CAR ACCIDENT... OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
"THE CHILD WAS THE GHOST'S SOLE SURVIVING RELATIVE, AND HE WAS GIFTED WITH GREAT MAGICAL POTENTIAL.
"THE POOR LAD NEVER HAD A CHANCE.
"THE WRAITH DARED TO DREAM. PERHAPS HIS ORIGINAL PLAN COULD STILL WORK.
"ROMANI HAUNTED THE BOY, BECOMING HIS *IMAGINARY* FRIEND.
"HE WHISPERED TO RONNIE, INSPIRING DREAMS OF HEROISM.
"ALL THE WHILE, THE WRAITH WAS TAPPING INTO THE BOY'S POWER, USING IT TO BIND THEM TOGETHER.


"CLAIMING RONNIE'S MAGIC AS HIS OWN, ROMANI CREATED THE ILLUSION HE STILL USES TODAY.
"THE BOY WAS DELIGHTED TO SEE HIS IMAGINARY FRIEND COME TO LIFE.
"RONNIE BELIEVED HIS LIES AND INNOCENTLY SURRENDERED HIS BIRTHRIGHT TO THE OTHERWISE POWERLESS GHOST.
"NOW HE COULD FIND YOU.
"FOR A SPLIT-SECOND, ROMANI THOUGHT YOU WERE THE ONE WHO HAD KILLED HIM--AMANDA--SINCE YOU SO CLOSELY RESEMBLED YOUR ANCESTOR.
"HE DETERMINED TO TAKE BACK THE POWER SHE TRAPPED WITHIN THE BUNNY.
"FIRST, HE HAD TO CONVINCE THE BOY TO BELIEVE THE BIGGEST LIE OF ALL.
"USING THE MYTHOS OF RONNIE'S FAVORITE COMIC BOOK HERO, HE TOLD HIM THAT OUR TIMELINE WAS BROKEN.
"HE SAID THAT THE ORIGINAL TIMELINE HAD TO BE RESTORED...THE ONE WHERE RONNIE'S PARENTS NEVER DIED, AND HE GREW UP TO BE A GREAT HERO."
IT WAS OUTLANDISH, BUT ROMANI HAD HONED HIS ABILITY TO MANIPULATE OTHERS FOR A HUNDRED YEARS. AND BESIDES...
...THE BOY *WANTED* TO BELIEVE IT WAS TRUE.
TO BE FAIR, ROMANI WOULD GO ON TO TRICK *ME*... L-LENA...AND SO MANY OTHERS INTO CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY HELPING HIM.

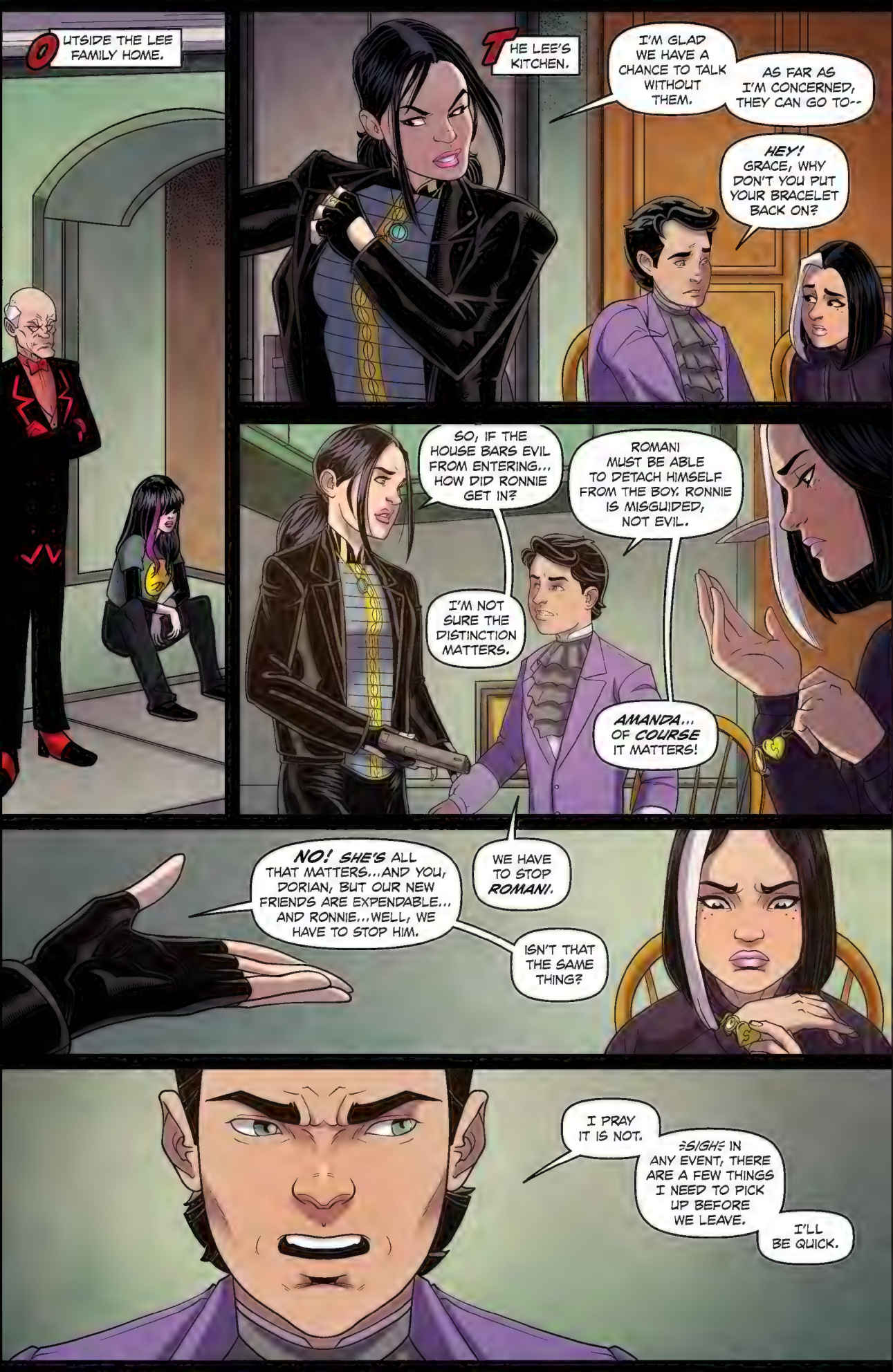
POOR RONNIE... SEE?!
IT'S NOT HIS FAULT!
HE'S NOT BAD!
IT'S THAT MAN. HE TRICKED RONNIE!
HONEY, WE STILL HAVE TO STOP THEM.
THE EVIL MAN--HE WANTS TO HURT US...TO KILL US, BECAUSE...
...WHY IS IT HE WANTS TO EITHER CONTROL US OR KILL US? IS IT JUST REVENGE?
TELL ME.
HE'S CERTAINLY NOT ABOVE PETTY REVENGE, BUT IT'S NOT THAT.
YOUR FAMILY HOLDS A UNIQUE PLACE IN THE ORDER OF THINGS.
GLYPH. ONE MORE CHANCE. TELL ME.
MOTHER NATURE.
GRACE MIGHT BE THE NEXT INCARNATION OF MOTHER NATURE.
OOOOOHH.
THAT'S IT! YOU--
WAIT! HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH!

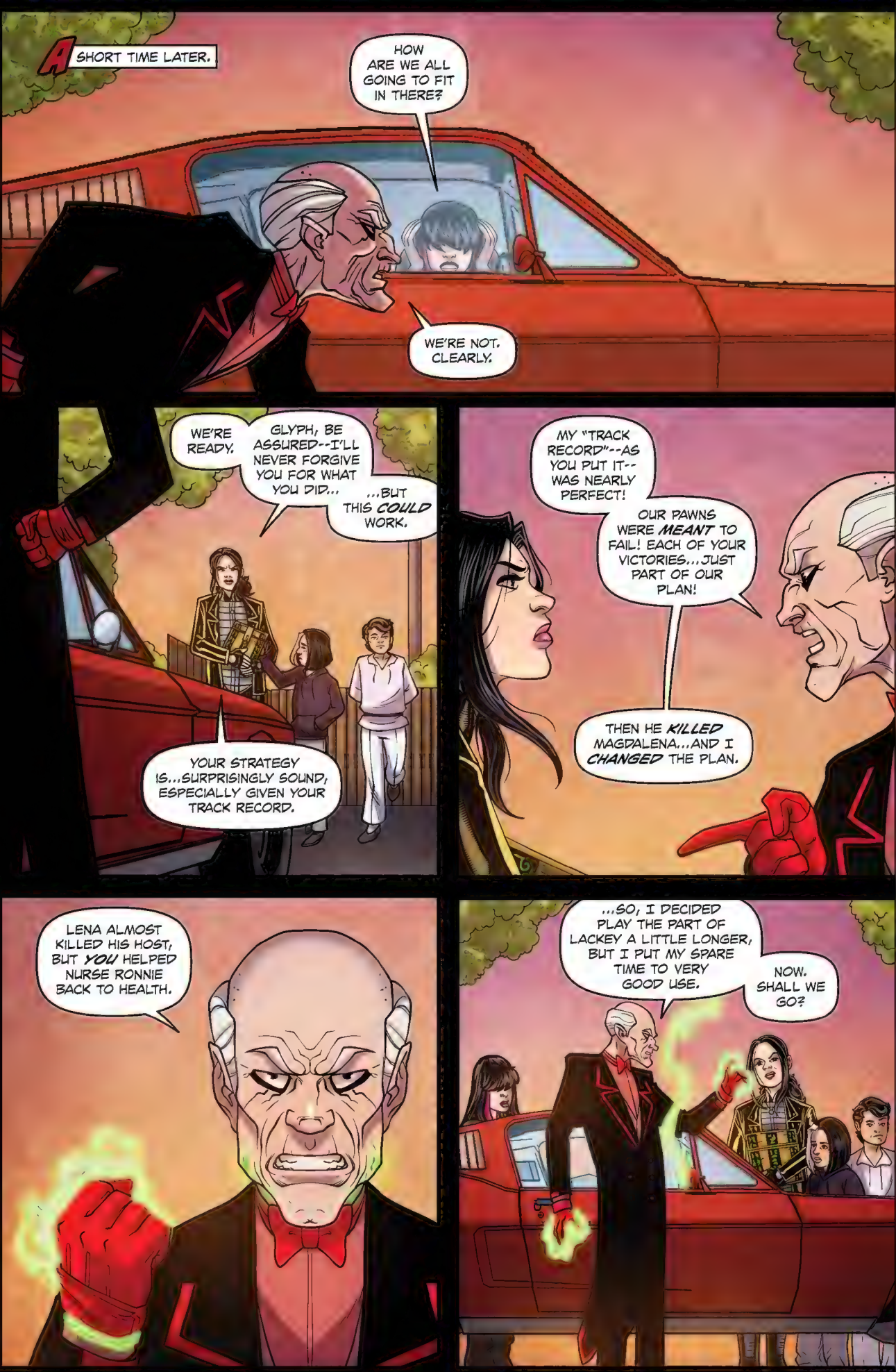
TWENTY MINUTES LATER.
LET'S ASSUME ALL OF THIS IS TRUE.
ROMANI WANTED AN ALLIANCE WITH OUR FAMILY.
SINCE WE REFUSED--AGAIN--HE WANTS TO KILL US.
HE THINKS, IF WE'RE DEAD, THE UNIVERSE WILL SHIFT OUR FAMILY'S ROLE TO OTHERS.
THEN, HE CAN TRY HIS LUCK WITH THEM.
...THAT'S NEVER GONNA HAPPEN. LET'S GO.
I LIVE TO SERVE.

LET'S GO!
LET'S GO, RONNIE.
WE NEED TO FINISH THIS!
TELL ME AGAIN...
...TELL ME...WE'RE THE HEROES.
EVERYTHING WE'VE DONE... IS TO FIX IT ALL.
EVERYBODY THAT'S BEEN HURT...
...TELL ME THEY'LL ALL BE OKAY-- THAT THEY WON'T EVEN REMEMBER ANY OF THE BAD STUFF...
...BECAUSE IT'LL BE LIKE IT NEVER HAPPENED.
THAT GRACE'S GRANDMA ISN'T REALLY, REALLY DEAD!
TELL ME, LIAR!

YES, RONNIE, OF COURSE. WITH GRACE HELPING US, WE'LL BE ABLE TO FIX *EVERYTHING*.
BUT YOU WERE GOING TO KILL HER! ONLY...ONLY I *STOPPED* YOU.
DURING THE BATTLE, YOUR CONCENTRATION SLIPPED, AND I SAW IT ALL, EVERYTHING YOU'VE BEEN HIDING FROM ME!
WELL, THEN YOU *KNOW*...WE ARE CORRECTING A GRAVE *INJUSTICE*.
ONCE I HAVE THE *POWER* I DESERVE, THE WORLD WILL CHANGE *FOREVER*. I COULDN'T HAVE COME THIS FAR... WITHOUT YOU.
WE'LL FIND YOUR GIRL FRIEND AND COMPLETE OUR WORK.
I'LL LET YOU TALK TO HER, MAKE OUR CASE.
NO!
I'M NOT HELPING YOU, *LIAR*... *NOT EVER AGAIN!*
I HATE YOU! I *HATE YOU! I*--
RONNIE! *STOP THIS!*
DON'T MAKE ME DO SOMETHING WE'LL *BOTH* REGRET.

YOU'RE THE LAST OF US...ALL THAT'S LEFT OF OUR FAMILY LINE.
LET ME GO!
I'M FOND OF YOU, BOY, BUT I'M WARNING YOU.
YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ME! YOU JUST NEED MY MAGIC!
NO--WITH THE POWER OF THE SHADOW DEMON AND THE STAFF NOW FULLY UNDER MY CONTROL--I DON'T NEED YOU! NOT ANYMORE!
ALL I NEED IS A BODY...
...AND I CAN CREATE A NEW ONE. BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE I CAN GET THE RAW MATERIALS.
WHY ARE YOU MAKING ME DO THIS?!
GR-GRACE... I'M SORR--
--AAAAHH!
THANK YOU, RONNIE. THIS IS MUCH BETTER.


OUTSIDE THE LEE FAMILY HOME.
THE LEE'S KITCHEN.
I'M GLAD WE HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK WITHOUT THEM.
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THEY CAN GO TO--
HEY! GRACE, WHY DON'T YOU PUT YOUR BRACELET BACK ON?
SO, IF THE HOUSE BARS EVIL FROM ENTERING... HOW DID RONNIE GET IN?
ROMANI MUST BE ABLE TO DETACH HIMSELF FROM THE BOY. RONNIE IS MISGUIDED, NOT EVIL.
I'M NOT SURE THE DISTINCTION MATTERS.
AMANDA... OF COURSE IT MATTERS!
NO! SHE'S ALL THAT MATTERS...AND YOU, DORIAN, BUT OUR NEW FRIENDS ARE EXPENDABLE... AND RONNIE...WELL, WE HAVE TO STOP HIM.
WE HAVE TO STOP ROMANI.
ISN'T THAT THE SAME THING?
I PRAY IT IS NOT.
=SIGH= IN ANY EVENT, THERE ARE A FEW THINGS I NEED TO PICK UP BEFORE WE LEAVE.
I'LL BE QUICK.


A SHORT TIME LATER.
HOW ARE WE ALL GOING TO FIT IN THERE?
WE'RE NOT. CLEARLY.
WE'RE READY.
GLYPH, BE ASSURED--I'LL NEVER FORGIVE YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID...
...BUT THIS COULD WORK.
YOUR STRATEGY IS...SURPRISINGLY SOUND, ESPECIALLY GIVEN YOUR TRACK RECORD.
MY "TRACK RECORD"--AS YOU PUT IT--WAS NEARLY PERFECT!
OUR PAWNS WERE MEANT TO FAIL! EACH OF YOUR VICTORIES...JUST PART OF OUR PLAN!
THEN HE KILLED MAGDALENA...AND I CHANGED THE PLAN.
LENA ALMOST KILLED HIS HOST, BUT YOU HELPED NURSE RONNIE BACK TO HEALTH.
...SO, I DECIDED PLAY THE PART OF LACKEY A LITTLE LONGER, BUT I PUT MY SPARE TIME TO VERY GOOD USE.
NOW. SHALL WE GO?

THE OFFICE BUILDING OF THE ABANDONED JUNKYARD.
MY PLAN WAS TO LURE HIM HERE AT SOME POINT ANYWAY.
I HAD HOPED TO DO THIS ALONE, BUT THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPRACTICAL.
WE'LL EACH TAKE OUR POSITIONS OUTSIDE WHILE THE GIRL AND THE BOX REMAIN HERE.
ALANIS, YOU ONLY NEED TO DO THE ONE THING.
IF YOU'RE A GOOD GIRL, THERE'S A NEW, UPGRADED PHONE IN YOUR FUTURE.
YES!
ANGEL PAJAMAS, I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY, DORIAN.
HERE, MR. GLYPH. NANA WANTS... UH, WANTED YOU TO HAVE THESE.
THE SHIELD IS FOR DORIAN, AND THE DRAGON IS FOR YOU. THEY'LL HELP.
...I SHOULDN'T...
IT'S OKAY. SHE KNEW IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT.
...HOW DO YOU...NEVER MIND. THANK YOU.
GRACE, STAY HERE WITH STABBITY.
GLYPH SAID THAT IF ANYONE BUT US COMES THROUGH THE DOOR, YOU'LL BE SENT TO SOMEPLACE SAFE.
BUT MOMMY, WE CAN--
THUMP
--WE CAN HELP.

FIFTEEN MINUTES EARLIER.
THERE! NO, WAIT...THEY TELEPORTED AGAIN.
=SIGH=
HE CAN'T KEEP THIS UP.
SO ANNOYING.
THAT'S OKAY.
I HAVE A FEW NEW TRICKS OF MY OWN...
...BUT TELEPORTING IS VERY USEFUL...
...MAYBE I SHOULDN'T KILL HIM.
MAYBE I'LL JUST TORTURE HIM?
NAH...WHO AM I KIDDING? ONCE I GET STARTED...
"...I WON'T BE ABLE TO STOP.
"GLYPH, PRAY FOR MY FORGIVENESS. I CAN BE MERCIFUL..."

NOW.
...LET ME HEAR YOU BEG.
YES...
DAMN...
...I DO LIKE BEGGING.
URHHH!
...YOU...
FUMFF
...GLYPH... MMFF!
GROVELLING IS GOOD, TOO.
I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU--FROM MAGDALENA!
Y-Y-YOU C-CAN'T HOLD... ME!
THA-AT CH-CHILD ISN'T... STRONG ENOUGH.
ALREADY S-SHE W-WEAKENS.
H-HURRRRYY.
THIS WON'T TAKE LONG.
HA! YOU'RE T-TOO F-FOND OF L-LIVING TO USE T-THAT.
WORTH IT... AS LONG AS YOU DIE FIRST!
THIS IS FOR HER!

YOU SURPRISE ME, GLYPH.
KRAK-KOOM
YOU'RE A SENTIMENTALIST, AFTER ALL.
BEST TO BURN THAT AWAY, IF YOU'RE GOING TO SERVE ME AGAIN.
AARRRGH!
AAAAAAA!!!!!
...BUT MAYBE IT'S BEST TO JUST ADMIT.. IT'S OVER BETWEEN US.
EH?
ABOMINATION!
THIS UNHOLY SIMULACRUM MADE FROM THE INNOCENT BOY--ANOTHER SOUL TO AVENGE!
BACK TO HELL...WHERE YOUR WRETCHED SOUL BELONGS!
ARRGHH!
YOU PEEKED AT MY ITINERARY, NAUGHTY HALF-ANGEL!
BUT IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN YOU--AND THESE PATHETIC FOOLS-- TO HASTEN MY DEPARTURE!
ELSEWHERE.

IT'S SO EASY TO BE BRAVE WHEN YOU THINK YOU'RE IMMORTAL...
...BUT THE WAR BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL WOULD BE POINTLESS IF WE COULDN'T KILL EACH OTHER!
AAAHK!
DON'T YOU AGREE?!
K-GG-KK--
GRRRRR!
HK-KK--

LET HIM GO!
WE STILL NEED TO FINISH OUR CHAT.
IT'S ONLY FAIR YOU SHOULD MEET THE SADIST YOU TWISTED ME INTO...FACE-TO-FACE!
THAT CRUELTY HAD BEEN FESTERING.
I JUST LANCED YOUR CONSCIENCE.
YOU SHOULD THANK ME FOR THE RELEASE.
THANK YOU.
AAAAHH--
--AAAHAHAHAHA!
YOU'VE BEEN *STEALING* FROM ME!
YOU SECRETED AWAY A SLIVER FROM EACH OF THE SOULS OF OUR PAWNS?!
WELL, YOU *WASTED* YOUR CACHE!
THAT FEEBLE ATTACK BARELY TINGLED.

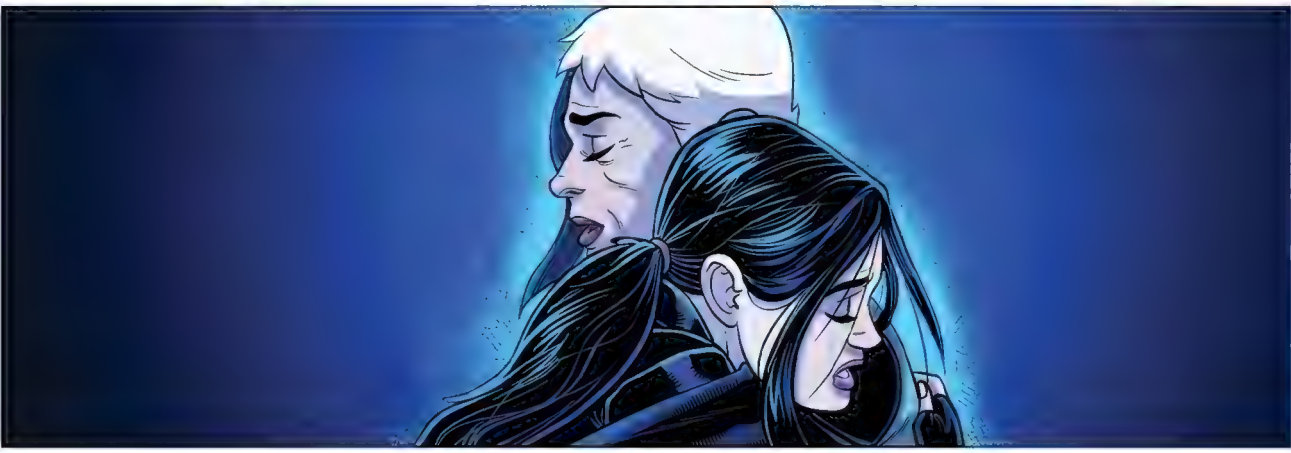
NOW TELL ME WHERE-- AAAH!
WELL, WELL, THAT'S NOT VERY SPORTING OF YOU, "MOMMY," STABBING A MAN IN THE BACK.
NO THREATS?!
NOTHING CLEVER TO SAY?!
HSSSS!
HSSST--
SCHICK!
KKKRUMZ

UUFF.
WHUMP

WHAT HAPPENED?!
AM I... NO! I HAVE TO PROTECT--
YOU'RE NOT DEAD, YET, AND GRACE IS GETTING READY.

SHE'D BETTER BE GETTING READY TO RUN!
NO. WE NEED ALL OF US.
THE PLAN WILL WORK, BUT NOT WITHOUT EVERYONE... AT FULL STRENGTH. ROMANI'S TOO POWERFUL.

AMANDA, THERE'S NO DECEPTION HERE... SOUL TO SOUL...ALL PRETENSE, EVERY BARRIER IS STRIPPED AWAY, LEAVING ONLY OUR PUREST INTENTIONS.
WE CAN SHARE EVERY MEMORY, EVERY FEELING WITH A TOUCH. I'LL GO FIRST.



ROMANI SPEAKS WITH RONNIE'S VOICE.
GRACE! COME OUT AND PLAY!
WE KNOW IT'S NOT RONNIE.
YOU JUST NEED A LITTLE MORE TIME.
GRACE! YOUR MOM IS HURT BAD!
SHE NEEDS YOUR HELP!
EH?
DROP THE CREEPSHOW ACT.
MOMMY'S DOING FINE... AND PLAYTIME IS OVER!
AMANDA? LENA? LENA, YOU NAUGHTY GIRL... WE ALREADY HAD OUR DANCE.
GIVE THE OTHER LADIES A CHAN--
CRASHUM
THIS WILL BE QUICK.
ENOUGH CHATTER!
NONE OF THAT MANIPULATION MAGIC.
SHUSH.
=MMPH=

I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING--USING THE ONLY POWER THAT'S ACTUALLY YOUR OWN TO FORCE THE OTHERS TO MAKE MISTAKES.
YOU'RE GOD-LIKE...BUT YOU STILL CHEAT TO WIN!
YOU TAUNTED AMANDA...ABOUT HOW POWERFUL SHE COULD HAVE BEEN...BUT SHE'D NEVER BE ABLE TO ACCESS HER MAGIC...
...HOWEVER, I CAN.
CRASH
LIKE YOU, I WAS BORN WITH JUST ENOUGH OF THE GIFT THAT I COULD SENSE MY IMPOTENCE...
...BUT UNLIKE YOU, I DEVOTED MYSELF TO STUDYING MAGIC, WORKING THAT MUCH HARDER.
I ALMOST DEFEATED YOU BY HARNESSING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF MY OWN FEEBLE SPARK OF MAGIC.
IMAGINE WHAT I CAN DO WITH AMANDA'S NEARLY UNLIMITED RESERVES!
YES... IMAGINE...
I FORMED THIS BODY FROM... AVAILABLE MATERIALS... AND YOU'RE EVEN MORE POWERFUL. YOU COULD DO THE SAME.
LENA, YOU'RE NEW TO BEING A SPIRIT, BUT BELIEVE ME... IT GETS OLD!
SHUT UP!
FOR EXAMPLE, EVEN WITH A WILLING HOST, THE TIME YOU CAN ENJOY THEIR HOSPITALITY IS EXTREMELY LIMITED.

THAT WAS VERY UNPLEASANT.
NOW, I ALMOST REGRET KILLING YOU.
IF YOU HAD MORE TIME, YOU MIGHT HAVE W--
I DON'T NEED MORE TIME. WE'VE ALREADY WON.
WELL, THAT'S... DISAPPOINTING.
I SHOULD GO TELL GRACE THAT EVERYTHING WORKED OUT!
I ALREADY KNOW.
THUMP!
RONNIE LOVED YOU.
HE TOLD ME WHAT YOU...YOU DID...HOW COULD YOU DO THAT TO SOMEONE WHO LOVED YOU? HE CRIED WHEN HE SAW NANA, BUT SHE TOLD HIM IT WAS OKAY...IT WASN'T HIS FAULT.
RONNIE WANTED TO STAY, TO HELP, BUT I TOLD HIM TO GO.
WE'D ALL BE FINE.
I TOLD HIM THAT HE WAS MY HERO...
...AND IT MIGHT BE A LONG TIME, BUT I'D SEE HIM AGAIN...
...BUT YOU WON'T SEE HIM AGAIN. EVER.

YOU'RE ALONE NOW.
YOU KILLED THE ONLY PERSON WHO LOVED YOU.
THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR YOU HERE.
CLEVER.
USING MY OWN SPELL... OF COURSE...
...FINISH IT! I'M READY, DEMON!
NO.
YOU'D TAKE HIS MAGIC AGAIN IF HE TOUCHED YOU NOW...
WHO TOLD YOU THAT?!
GLYPH?
HE JUST WANTS THE POWER FOR HIMSELF!
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
WHY IS POWER SO IMPORTANT?
WHY IS IT THE ONLY THING THAT YOU CARE ABOUT?
IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS... CONTROL!
WHEN YOU'RE WEAK, PEOPLE TAKE EVERYTHING FROM YOU!
THEY HURT YOU AND LAUGH AT YOUR PAIN!
NOW I'M THE ONE WHO TAKES WHATEVER I WANT!
BUT YOU'VE GOT NOTHING. YOU DIED.
YOU DID ALL THIS--KILLED NANA, RONNIE, ALL THESE PEOPLE...AND THEY--YOU...
...FOR NOTHING.

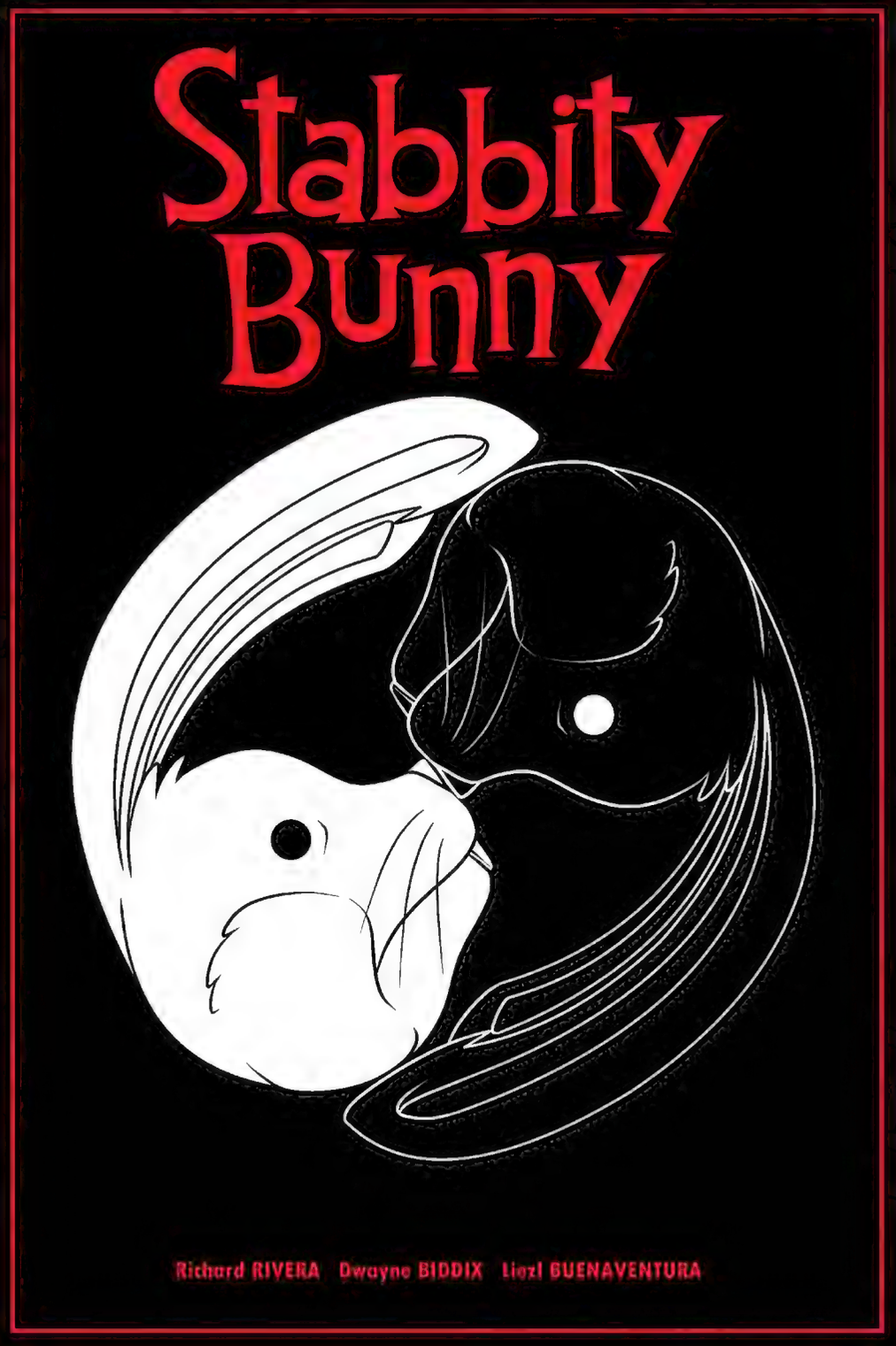
HEH. SO NAÏVE.
TOO YOUNG TO UNDERSTAND...
...REVENGE!
KRAK'THOOM
FSSSST
I MISS RONNIE AND NANA.
IT MAKES ME WANT TO PROTECT EVERYONE ELSE EVEN MORE.
I WANT THEM TO BE HAPPY.
NANA TOLD ME THAT WHEN YOU GET OLD, THAT'S WHAT MATTERS...
...THE MOMENTS AND MEMORIES YOU SHARE WITH THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE.
EHH?!

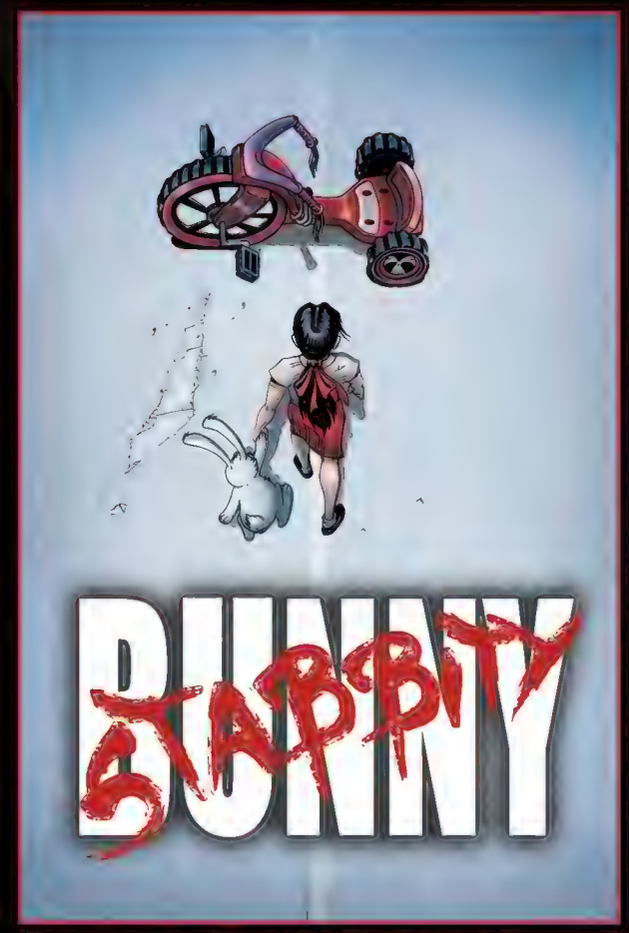
"NANA SAID, 'YOUR LIFE WILL BE MEASURED...
N-NO! NO!
"'...BY HOW YOU TREATED OTHERS...
"'...AND THOSE YOU HELPED ALONG THE WAY.
NOOOOAAAAA!!!!!!
"'...THAT'S ALL YOU LEAVE BEHIND."'

A FEW MINUTES LATER...
REST, MOMMY.
I HOPE YOU FEEL BETTER.
YOU'RE GOING TO BE OKAY...
...RIGHT, NANA? SHE'S JUST RESTING, RIGHT?
YES, HONEY, SHE JUST NEEDS A LITTLE TIME.
LETTING ME USE HER MAGIC MADE HER VERY TIRED.
IS EVERYONE ELSE OKAY? DORIAN?
HE'S HURT PRETTY BADLY, BUT IF ANYONE CAN HELP HIM, IT'S GLYPH.
I KNOW HE USED TO BE YOUR FRIEND, BUT ISN'T HE...A BAD MAN?
HE REALLY ISN'T... WASN'T BAD.
ROMANI TRICKED HIM... JUST LIKE HE TRICKED YOUR FRIEND...
OKAY, SO... HE'S GOOD NOW?
I WOULDN'T EXACTLY SAY THAT, BUT HE WON'T HURT YOU OR OUR FAMILY NOW THAT HE'S HIMSELF AGAIN.
HMM.

YOU WERE RIGHT, NANA.
IT WAS BETTER TO SURPRISE EVERYONE... NOT TELL THEM YOU WERE HERE.
YES, HONEY, WE COULDN'T BE SURE WHO WAS LISTENING.
IT WAS BETTER THIS WAY.
BUT...NOW YOU'RE GOING AWAY...AREN'T YOU?
WELL, GRACE, YOU KNOW I CAN'T STAY FOREVER...
...BUT I THINK I CAN STICK AROUND A WHILE.
YOU CAN?! OH, NANA! I LOVE YOU! I'M SO--
GRAACCE?
THE END OF PART ONE

COVER GALLERY





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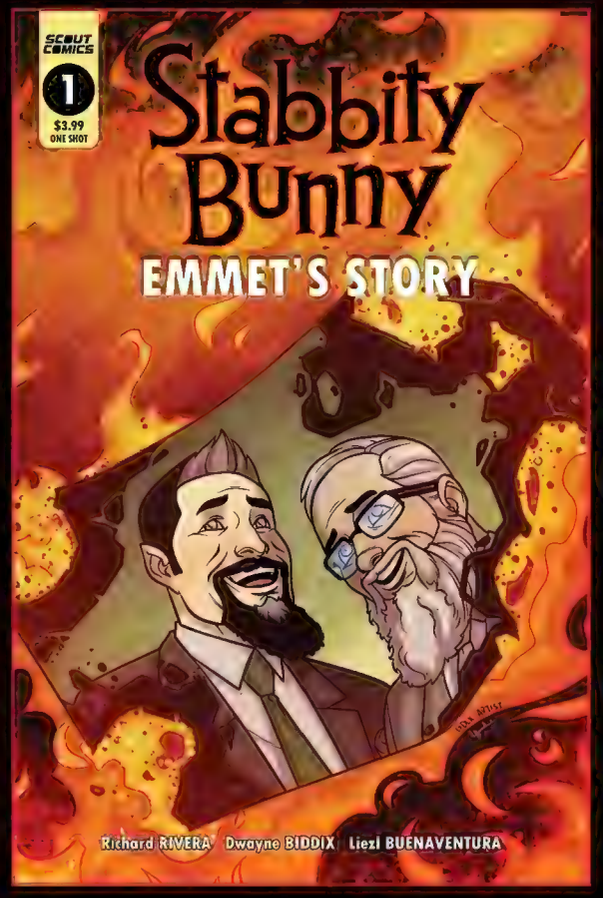
Stabbity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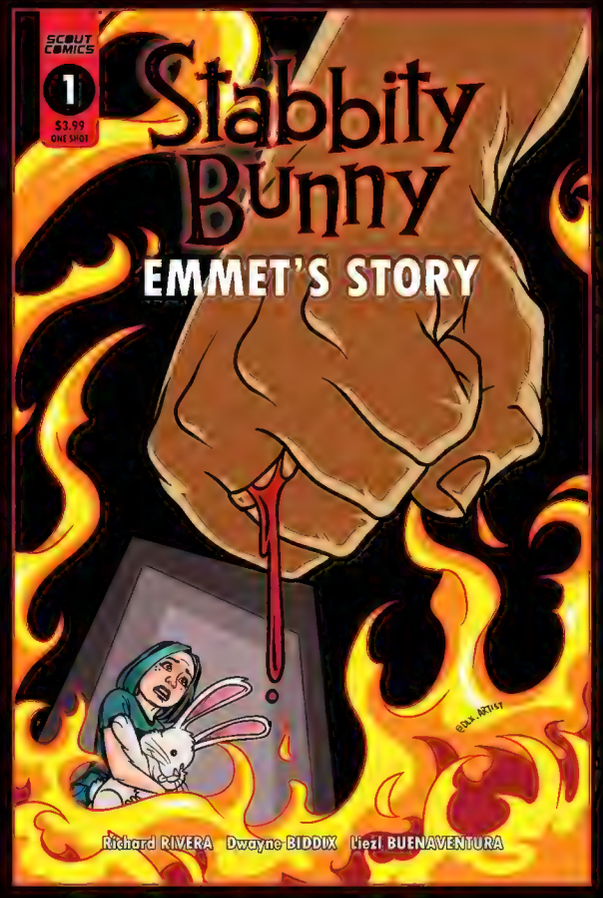
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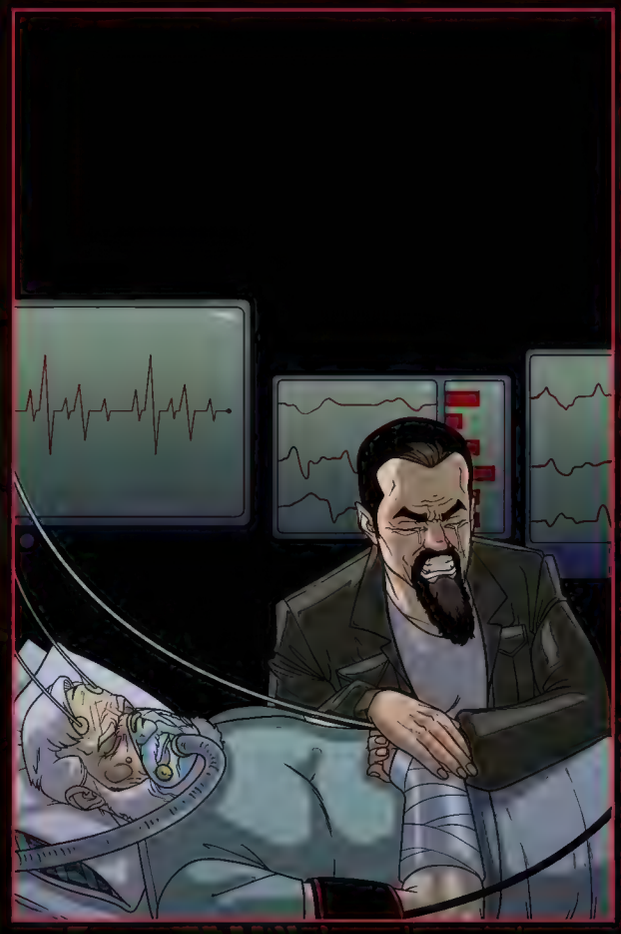

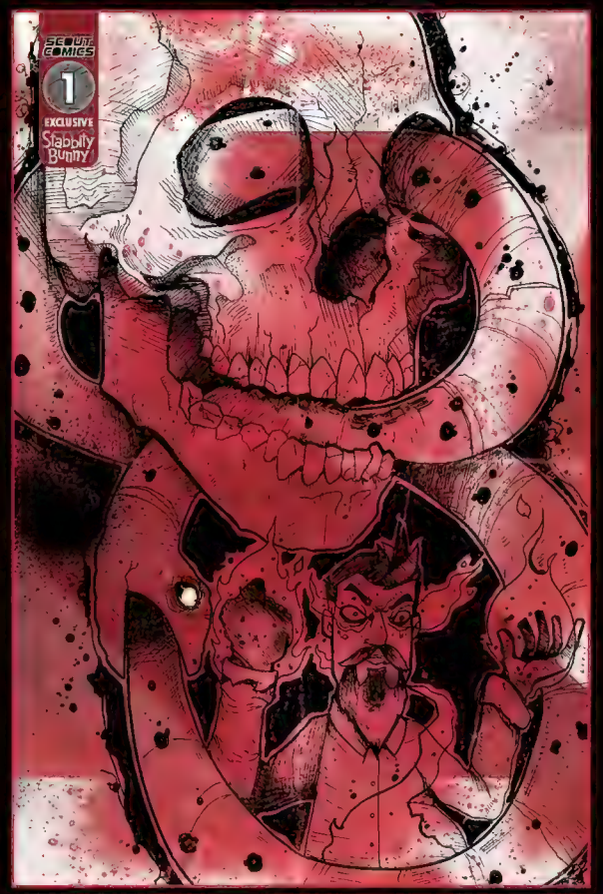
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1
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Stabbity Bunny

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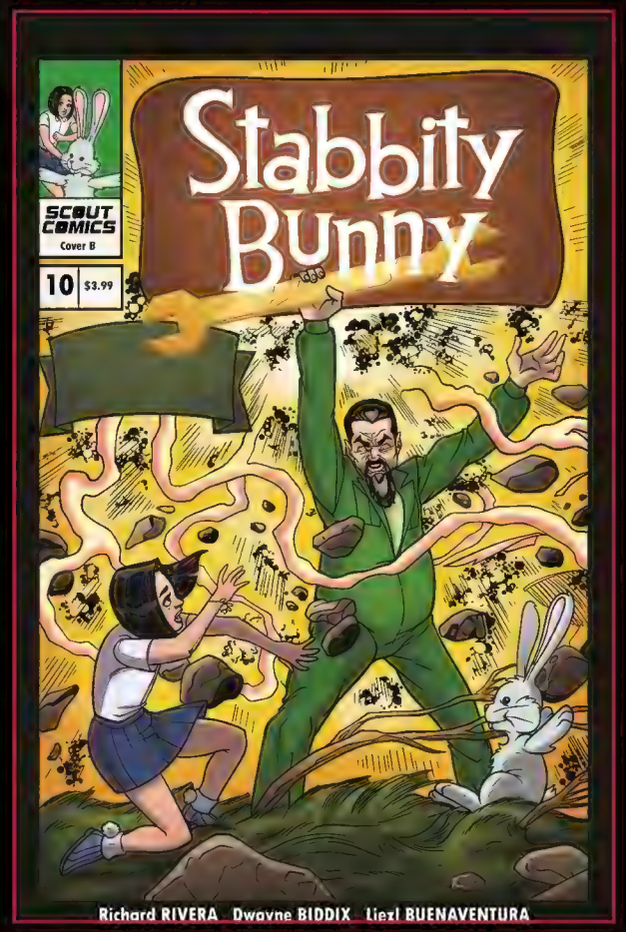
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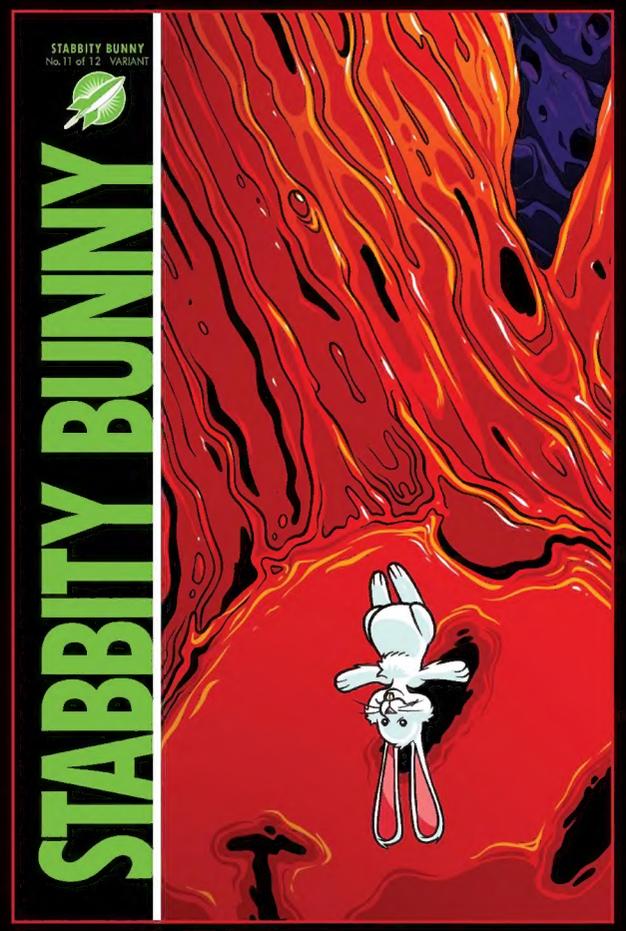
STABBITY BUNNY
No. 11 of 12 VARIANT
STABBITY BUNNY

SIN

Stabbity Bunny

CREATOR BIOS

RICHARD RIVERA - WRITER

Richard Rivera has written/created several comic book series including: Storm Pirates, Shadow Play, Stabbity Bunny, Stabbity Ever After, Create-A-Comic, Wild Bull and Chipper, and more. Many of these series in one shared universe. He is a board member and publisher with Scout Comics and Entertainment, the fast-growing comic publisher that signed his self-published series and distributed it worldwide.

DWAYNE BIDDIX - ARTIST

Dwayne is a comic book artist as well as a character designer on Freak Brothers for Tubi and Slippin' Jimmy for AMC+. Dwayne has always had a passion for drawing and designing characters. He currently lives in a small town in the middle of nowhere, but at least it's pretty!

LIEZL BUENAVENTURA - COLORIST

Liezl Buenaventura is a comic colorist and writer from Manila, Philippines. Over the years, she has colored a variety of titles for Scout Comics ("Stabbity Bunny", "Shadow Play"), Scholastic ("This Land"), and TPub Comics ("The Theory", "Amputation Capital"). In her spare time, she plays video games with her son. He always wins.

DR. VINK

WITH A VA-VA-VA

A Dr. Vink Poor Man's Rip

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